

French's Acting Edition. No. 1484

# THE HAPPY ENDING

A Play in Three Acts

By IAN HAY



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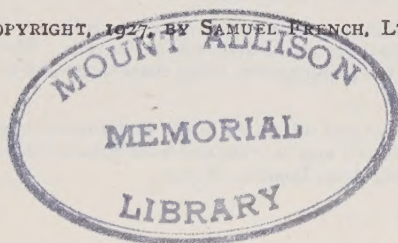
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BY  
IAN HAY

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## THE HAPPY ENDING

Played at the St. James's Theatre, London, on November 30th, 1922, with the following Cast of Characters (in order of their appearance):—

DENIS CRADOCK . . . . .	<i>Mr. John Williams.</i>
HAROLD BAGBY . . . . .	<i>Mr. Miles Malleson.</i>
SIMMONDS . . . . .	<i>Miss Gwladys Gaynor.</i>
JOAN CRADOCK . . . . .	<i>Miss Elizabeth Irving.</i>
SIR ANTHONY FENWICK . . . . .	<i>Mr. Fred Kerr.</i>
MOLLY CRADOCK . . . . .	<i>Miss Adèle Dixon.</i>
MILDRED CRADOCK . . . . .	<i>Miss Ethel Irving.</i>
LAURA MEAKIN . . . . .	<i>Miss Jean Cadell.</i>
DALE CONWAY . . . . .	<i>Mr. Robert Loraine.</i>
MR. MOON . . . . .	<i>Mr. F. B. J. Sharp.</i>
SIR THOMAS MOBBERLEY . . . . .	<i>Mr. Frederic de Lara.</i>
LADY MOBBERLEY . . . . .	<i>Miss Elizabeth Rosslyn.</i>
PHYLLIS HARDING . . . . .	<i>Miss Joan Clarkson.</i>

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ACT I

*The breakfast-room in MRS. CRADOCK'S house on the river.*

ACT II


*The same.*

*(Three weeks elapse.)*

ACT III

*The lawn, looking on the river, that night.*

[NOTE.—If this scene is found too elaborate for a small amateur stage, almost any exterior scene will do. The only essentials are a small flight of wooden steps leading on L. and a trellis or hedge down the centre, dividing the stage in two.]



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# THE HAPPY ENDING

## ACT I

SCENE.—*The Breakfast-room of the Old Mill House.*

TIME.—*Nine o'clock on a fine summer morning.*

*(The table is laid for breakfast as shown on plot. Through the French windows can be seen a typical Thames Valley landscape in the sunshine.)*

*(DENIS CRADOCK and HAROLD BAGBY stroll in from the garden R. by the window, wearing dressing-gowns, with bath towels round their shoulders. They are smoking cigarettes and have obviously been bathing. Both are clean-cut and well-bred. DENIS is a handsome boy of 21, with a suggestion of weakness in his face and manner. HAROLD is entirely satisfied with himself and the world as he sees it.)*

DENIS. Pretty nippy, wasn't it?

HAROLD. Never mind; we shall be all of a glow in five minutes.

DENIS. Ha, ha—breakfast! Let's hurry up and dress. I'll just look at the cricket first. *(Crosses to table at head of sofa L. and takes up a newspaper.)*

HAROLD. What time does the post arrive, my son? *(At table R.C.)*

DENIS. We're a bit rural in these parts, but the postman ought to have called by this time. Expecting a letter?

HAROLD. Yes; from my accountant.

DENIS. Chartered?

HAROLD. No; turf. Aha—porridge! *(Going up to the dinner wagon R.)* Can I have some porridge? *(Helps himself.)*

DENIS. What—before you dress?

HAROLD. Yes; it is part of my scheme of diet. Shall I explain it to you?

DENIS. No!

HAROLD. If one takes porridge actually at breakfast, it cramps one's style for the rest of the meal; whereas, if one takes it now, and then goes up to dress, it gives the porridge time to shake down, and thus clears the track for more delectable fare, as it were. *(Takes a large mouthful.)*

DENIS. It must be an awful thing to go through life soliloquizing about food!

HAROLD (*crosses L.C. to DENIS*). Talking of delectable fare, why was your twenty-first birthday dinner-party held last night instead of to-day?

DENIS. We had to anticipate a bit, on account of my kid sister. Her half-term leave just fitted in. She goes back this morning. I see Kent are putting it across Surrey.

HAROLD (*looking over his shoulder*). Does it say anything about the runners for the Gold Cup?

DENIS. My dear Bags, take the advice of a man older and wiser than yourself, and keep away from horses. Stick to botany, or fretwork, or talking to yourself. Have your hobbies, but let them be innocuous, my son. (*Bus. pats him on back.*)

HAROLD. Jolly good porridge, this. Are all your hobbies as innocuous as that, my lad? What about that little—what's-a-name? (*He looks towards the door R.*)

DENIS. Now you are getting away from the point. It's a grave fault in your character; lack of concentration. Come up and dress! (*He takes HAROLD'S arm.*) We are warned for a picnic: lunch up Ripleigh Reach, for Uncle Tony's benefit. (*Crossing to staircase up R.*)

HAROLD. Ah, the old boy from India? A picnic will do his liver a bit of no good. I had a long pow-wow with him last night. Really a very intelligent old fellow!

(*They go out up the stairs.—HAROLD disappears. DENIS comes down again, looks round the room for a moment. HAROLD calls, "Come on, Denny!" DENIS disappears upstairs after HAROLD.*)

(SIMMONDS, a pretty, fluffily fair parlourmaid, enters R. from dining-room, carrying letters and parcels and a new tobacco jar on a tray. She sets down the tobacco jar by DENIS'S plate and distributes the letters round the table, leaving the parcels for DENIS, by his plate, on the tray. There is nothing of the pert chambermaid about her. She is a perfectly unsophisticated village girl whom MRS. CRADOCK is trying to train into a good servant. Most of the letters are for DENIS. SIMMONDS produces a little package—a 9-carat gold horse-shoe tie pin in a case wrapped up in tissue paper—from her apron and slips it underneath the napkin at DENIS'S place. She crosses L. and picks up a large framed photograph of DENIS from side cabinet, and kisses it timidly.)

(*Enter R. JOAN, smoking a cigarette. She carries a small package in her hand. She is a pretty girl of 19, modern, sophisticated, unsentimental.*)

(*Bus. SIMMONDS puts down photo hurriedly when JOAN speaks.*)

JOAN. Is the post in, Simmonds?

SIMMONDS (*coming to head of table R.C.*). Yes, Miss Joan. I was just laying it out. It's nearly all for Mr. Denis this morning. This is from all of us downstairs. (*She indicates the tobacco jar.*)

JOAN. I call that very nice of you all. (*Down to R. corner at dinner-wagon and pours out cup of tea and takes it to table R.C.*) Mr. Denis will go down and thank you himself after breakfast, I am sure.

SIMMONDS. Yes, miss. I'll tell cook. (*Crosses R. end of table.*)

JOAN (*laying her packet on DENIS'S plate, sits down*). Hallo! Some one has been breakfasting here already!

SIMMONDS. Yes, miss; it was Miss Molly. (*Moves MOLLY'S chair and puts it in recess R. off stage.*) She has to catch the ten o'clock train. She's upstairs now, getting her things on. I will clear her place. (*Gets tray from recess off stage R.*)

JOAN. Do. I loathe *débris*.

(*By this time JOAN has taken a little toast and is alternately drinking tea, munching toast, and smoking.*)

SIMMONDS. Yes, miss. (*She clears MOLLY'S place and goes out R. into dining-room.*)

(*Enter down the staircase R. SIR ANTHONY FENWICK. He is a shrewd, humorous, kindly old gentleman of about 65.*)

JOAN. Good morning, Uncle Tony!

SIR ANTHONY. Good morning, Joan. Are we the first down? (*Down to R. corner.*)

JOAN. Oh, no! Denny and Bags have been out bathing.

SIR ANTHONY. Bags?

JOAN (*laughs*). Yes—Harold Bagby. You met him at dinner last night.

SIR ANTHONY. Oh, that young gentleman. (*Bus. takes his letters from breakfast-table, reads same*). He told me several things that I had not previously known about the proper way to govern an Indian Province.

(JOAN *laughs*.)

Your fiancé, I gathered.

JOAN. Well, the matter has hardly got beyond the committee stage, as yet.

SIR ANTHONY. You mean the local gossips are still sitting on it. (*Pours out tea for himself.*)

JOAN. Yes. They're a large committee, and they sit heavily. Anyhow, Denny and Bags will be down presently. I saw them cross the lawn a long time ago. Mother is upstairs fussing over Molly, getting her ready for the train. Molly really is a blessing.

SIR ANTHONY (*puts tea on table R.C.*). I only made her acquaintance last night; and she captured my elderly heart at once.

JOAN. I don't mean that way. Molly is a great convenience to



Denis and me ; because she loves being fussed over, and mothered. A nice, affectionate, old-fashioned child ; a safety-valve for mother's maternal instincts. It saves us two a lot ! What are you staring at ?

SIR ANTHONY. I apologize. You interest me so.

JOAN. You mean, shock you ?

SIR ANTHONY (*chuckling*). Upon my soul, I don't know !

JOAN. You soon will !

SIR ANTHONY. You are a new type to me. You see, I spent most of my life in the Orient——

JOAN. And you regard me as an Occidental hussy. I know !

SIR ANTHONY. No, no, my dear ; quite the reverse. I find you most attractive—too attractive ! Heigho ! If youth but knew——

JOAN. Knew what ?

SIR ANTHONY. How age worships it ! (*Goes up to French windows and looks out.*)

JOAN. Hangs on to it, you mean !

SIR ANTHONY (*who has not heard this remark*). What a landscape ! It was getting too dark to appreciate it when I arrived last night.

JOAN (*goes to table R.C. and gets a cigarette, then up to window, R. of SIR ANTHONY*). I am glad you like it, because it's all we have to offer you here. We are purely aquatic. We are going to take you out for a picnic presently. There's Ripleigh Reach running up in that direction ; our local regatta is held there every year. We will take you to it. I am going to be in the Dongola race.

SIR ANTHONY. What is that island ? (*Pointing R.*)

JOAN. That's Abbot's Island. It splits the river. There's a lock on one side and a weir on the other. This is the weir side. Of course that gives mother fits all day long.

(SIR ANTHONY comes down to R. corner.)

SIR ANTHONY (*sitting down at table R. corner*). And why should it give mother fits ?

JOAN. Because the weir makes the current on this side of the river run much faster than on the other. She has quite decided that we are all going to be drowned there one day. The only thing she hasn't settled is the order of going in.

(*She crosses to the fireplace, powders her nose, sits on the sofa, and begins to read the "Daily Mirror."* SIR ANTHONY watches her with some amusement.)

(SIMMONDS enters R. from dining-room.)

SIMMONDS. The car is at the door for Miss Molly.

JOAN. All right ! Just tell her, please. No ; here she is now.

(SIMMONDS goes out R. into dining-room.)

(MOLLY enters from staircase R. and comes down to L. of table opposite to SIR ANTHONY, who rises. She has a fountain-pen, and a bag, also an autograph book which she hides behind her back. MOLLY is 15. She is the opposite of JOAN in every way; enthusiastic, romantic, affectionate, and a born hero-worshipper.)

MOLLY. I've got to say good-bye already, Uncle Tony. Isn't it a shame, just when I've met you?

SIR ANTHONY. That's prettily said, Molly. But we shall meet again often. Your great-uncle knows a good thing when he sees it.

MOLLY. Will you write your name in my autograph book? (Comes round to head of table to SIR ANTHONY.)

SIR ANTHONY. With pleasure.

(MOLLY gives him pen and book.)

MOLLY. Don't write on those pages. They are just for girls, you know. Write here, on this or that. Anywhere except on Lord Roberts' page.

SIR ANTHONY. Where did you catch Lord Roberts?

MOLLY. I met him once, when I was quite a little girl, at a fancy dress fair. I sold him a box of matches. When I told him that my father had fought under him in South Africa, he signed his name at once.

JOAN. The child was quite shameless.

MOLLY. He has that page all to himself, you see—except for one other person.

SIR ANTHONY. But I see no other name.

MOLLY (a little shyly). Oh that's just a pretend of mine. There's another name that I like to think is there—that's all. I can't explain.

JOAN. The child is mentally deficient, we fear.

MOLLY (indicating pages). Write on any of those pages. Put your name next to some one you like.

SIR ANTHONY. Do you think Rudyard Kipling would mind if I wrote my name down in this corner, near him?

MOLLY. I am sure he wouldn't. He knows all about India, too. (By this time SIR ANTHONY has signed.) Thank you so much. Good-bye, dear Uncle Tony. Mind you're free when I come home for my holidays. (Kisses him.)

SIR ANTHONY. When will that be?

MOLLY. The beginning of August. (Crosses to JOAN to sofa.)

SIR ANTHONY. I shall book the date forthwith.

MOLLY. Good-bye, Joan. (Kisses her, then crosses to staircase; picks up her bag and exit R.)

(SIR ANTHONY sits again.)

JOAN. Good-bye-ee! (After MOLLY exits.) What a blessed thing is youth!

SIR ANTHONY. Lord, bless my soul! (Stares at her.)

JOAN. Uncle Tony, you are staring at me *again*.

SIR ANTHONY (*chuckling*). You are very easy to stare at, my dear!

JOAN. I suppose the frivolity of this generation shocks you?

SIR ANTHONY. Heaven forgive me, I rather like it! I was just wondering where you got yours from. Not from your mother, I'll be bound.

JOAN. No. Mother is much too maternal to have a sense of humour. I don't think I can have got it from my father either.

SIR ANTHONY. I never knew him.

JOAN. Neither did I, for that matter. At least, I was only a baby when he died. But from mother's account of him he has never sounded particularly frivolous!

SIR ANTHONY. She must have been very fond of him.

JOAN. Fond? She was quite silly about him. She is still. She never tires of holding him up to us. (*Turning suddenly upon SIR ANTHONY.*) Uncle Tony, what do *you* think of Ancestor Worship? Do you consider it a really sportsmanlike religion?

SIR ANTHONY. I am afraid I never came sufficiently in contact with it, my dear, to venture an opinion.

JOAN. Well, stay here a bit longer and you will! This family of ours has been trained to model itself day by day, year by year, upon a male parent whom none of us can remember and whom one of us never even saw. We have father for breakfast, father for lunch, and father for dinner.

(SIR ANTHONY *chuckles all through this speech.*)

He has been with us from our cradles. He is a standing work of reference, of the most irritating kind. Whenever Denny and I got into mischief in our youth, the record of our parent was quoted. *He* never got his feet wet, or (*rises and crosses to table R.C.*) employed slang expressions; he never smoked in bed, or left bills unpaid; he was clean in person, courteous to those of humble station, and kind to animals; he went to church twice on Sundays, and wore nice sensible underclothing all the year round. He must have been a paralysing person to live with. Yet mother worships his memory. (*Suddenly pulling herself up.*) Does that sound unfilial, Uncle Tony, or irreverent?

SIR ANTHONY. It sounds very human, my dear.

JOAN. That's just the word! I am awfully human, and I *can't* worship an abstraction. I *can't* speak in a hushed voice of the dead—especially the dead I never knew. I suppose if I had known my father in the flesh I wouldn't speak like this; it would have been disloyal. Of course, I never talk to mother this way, except in fun. It would hurt her.

SIR ANTHONY. I'm sure you don't, my dear.

JOAN. We're a queer family, Uncle Tony. (*Crosses L. Sits on head of sofa.*)



SIR ANTHONY. My dear, *all* families are queer. Even when they are not they like to think they are. But I understand how you feel. You and Master Denny are modern, and you chafe under apron-strings—eh?

JOAN. Yes, that's it. And ancestors!

SIR ANTHONY. They're the same thing.

JOAN. Do talk to Mother about them!

(MILDRED bustles in R. *She is an attractive widow of a little over 40. She has seen a good deal of life, and may have had her troubles; but she is above all a woman of cheerful common sense, innately old-fashioned and conservative, yet tolerant of the peculiarities of the present age.* SIR ANTHONY rises.)

MILDRED. Good morning, Uncle Tony. (*Kisses him.*)

SIR ANTHONY. Good morning, Mildred. (*Sits.*)

MILDRED. You must think me a most neglectful hostess. But going back to school is a rather solemn occasion, isn't it?

SIR ANTHONY. It certainly appears to be a whole-time job for Mother.

MILDRED. I can look after you now. (*At head of table.*) Are you having a proper breakfast?

SIR ANTHONY. I've just finished.

MILDRED. Joan, dearest, are you taking care of him?

JOAN. Uncle Tony (*rises and crosses to table R.C.*) and I are taking care of one another. We understand one another perfectly already. Has your favourite child departed yet?

(MILDRED pushes JOAN away.)

MILDRED. Isn't that a shame? They know I have no favourite; and yet she and Denny always insist that I have. I love them all; only Molly, being the old-fashioned one, responds more, when——

JOAN. All right, Mother, all right! It was only a leg pull, as usual. (*Crosses to table head of sofa and gets cigarette.*)

MILDRED. I am an easy victim, I am afraid! (*Indicating tobacco-jar.*) Is this one of Denny's birthday presents?

JOAN. Yes. From cook, Jane, Tweeny, and Simmonds, with a loving kiss.

MILDRED. How good of them! I will slip mine under his napkin.

JOAN. My poor mother, you can't slip a cowhide suitcase under a folded napkin.

MILDRED (*rather apologetically*). Oh, he's had the suitcase. This is just a little tip. (*She has an envelope in her hand.*)

JOAN. I shall remember that when my turn comes.

MILDRED (*lifting the napkin*). There's something here already. (*She picks up SIMMONDS' little package.*) I wonder whom this is from. You, dear?

JOAN (*crosses R.C. to table*). No. My offering is the cigarette-case. Perhaps it's from Molly.

MILDRED. I think she gave him hers last night. Was it you, Uncle Tony?

SIR ANTHONY. No. Mine is still in my pocket. It will be handed over shortly, accompanied by an improving discourse from godfather.

MILDRED. I wonder if it would be fair to peep at this.

JOAN. Why not?

MILDRED. He will be terribly cross if he catches us.

JOAN. Never mind; chance it!

MILDRED (*unrolling the paper*). What a funny little present! A horseshoe scarf-pin.

JOAN. Nine-carat gold!

MILDRED. With an inscription. Why "Mizpah," I wonder.

JOAN (*crosses to fireplace, dryly, and in an undertone*). It means that Master Denny is getting rather a big boy. (*To SIR ANTHONY*.) What sort of a discourse are you going to deliver to him, Uncle Tony?

SIR ANTHONY. I am not sure. Can you suggest a text?

JOAN. I could; but I won't.

MILDRED (*leaning over table*). I shall be glad if you *will* just say a word to him, Uncle Tony. I was wondering only this morning what advice his father would have given him——

JOAN. Now we've done it, Uncle Tony!

SIR ANTHONY. Done what, my dear?

JOAN. Started mother. Ancestor worship has commenced for the day. Hallo, here are the boys!

(*Voices are heard outside. DENIS and HAROLD appear from staircase R. MILDRED, who has hastily rolled up the present again, puts it under napkin and goes forward and embraces her son. HAROLD goes down R.*)

MILDRED. Denny dearest, bless you! Have a happy birthday.

DENIS (*kissing her warmly*). Thank you, mother.

SIR ANTHONY. Many happy returns, Denny. Congratulations.

DENIS. Thank you, Uncle Tony. (*He shakes hands.*)

(*SIR ANTHONY crosses to sofa and sits with newspaper.*)

JOAN. Good luck, my child!

DENIS. Thank you, sister! (*He turns to head of table.*) Presents! Loud applause! (*He begins examining his presents with expressions of gratitude.*)

JOAN (*to HAROLD*). Morning, Bags!

HAROLD. Morning, Joan.

(*They nod.*)

(*HAROLD gets sausages from dinner wagon R. and puts them on table R.C. DENIS and HAROLD are now sitting at the table, the latter in chair on the right of DENIS. JOAN sits in chair L. corner and lights cigarette.*)

MILDRED (*at R. of table*). Now, boys, eat up your breakfast quickly and get the launch ready. We are going to take Uncle Tony up Ripleigh Reach. (*She pours out cup of tea at dinner wagon and brings it to DENIS.*)

DENIS. Picnic lunch?

MILDRED. Yes.

DENIS (*to HAROLD*). That means that about one o'clock you will find yourself sitting on a wasps' nest, eating chicken salad with a fountain-pen.

(MILDRED *pours out another cup of tea from dinner wagon R. and bringing it to left of table, sits.*)

You'd better have a second helping of sausages, my lad. Are you coming too, mother?

MILDRED. Oh, yes. I must be with you to-day.

(LAURA MEAKIN *appears at the window. She is a determined-looking spinster of about 40 ; she has glasses on and carries a walking-stick.*)

LAURA (*in a deep voice*). Good morning, everybody!

MILDRED (*turning and seeing LAURA*). Oh, good morning, Laura! How nice of you to look in.

LAURA. I am coming in by the window (*coming down L.*). I never worry about standing on ceremony with you.

MILDRED (*coming c.*). This is my uncle, Sir Anthony Fenwick.

(SIR ANTHONY *rises.*)

Uncle Tony, this is Miss Meakin, our nearest neighbour and an old friend.

SIR ANTHONY. How do you do?

LAURA. I have a slight cold in the head.

SIR ANTHONY. I am sorry.

LAURA. I suppose you arrived for the dinner last night? I was expecting you to invite me too, Mildred—but of course old friends are easily dropped. Joan, I have spoken to you before about cigarette smoking.

JOAN (*L. of settee*). Yes, Laura; and I promise you many opportunities of doing so again. (*She turns away to flick her cigarette ash into the fireplace.*)

LAURA. You know it will ruin your teeth in time. Your complexion is going already. Anybody can see that.

JOAN (*bus. gets powder-puff out of bag and powders her face*). There's plenty more where it comes from, thank you, dear.

(LAURA, *fairly repulsed, turns on the two boys.*)

LAURA. Good morning, Denis.

DENIS. Good morning, Laura!

LAURA. You have now reached years of discretion. It was time!



DENIS. Thank you so much for pointing it out. You know Bags, don't you?

LAURA. I do not approve of childish nicknames, Denis. Good morning, Mr. Bagby!

HAROLD. Good morning, Miss Meakin! (*With his mouth full: he stands up and sits down.*)

LAURA. In my young days gentlemen were not accustomed to speak to ladies with their mouths full. (*She turns to JOAN.*) But perhaps Joan has not been educated to expect these courtesies.

(*While her back is turned DENIS and HAROLD dig one another in the ribs and grin. LAURA turns to them again.*)

I have a present for you, Denis.

DENIS. What is it? Bed-socks, or tracts?

LAURA (*crossing in front of SIR ANTHONY and MILDRED, hands him a small book—he takes it*). It is a recently published work on Social Service, by a personal friend of mine.

DENIS (*politely*). Thank you very much. Have I got to read it?

LAURA. Certainly. It will do you good. It will do you all good.

DENIS. Then we'll let mother read it first. (*Offering fruit.*) Have a banana?

LAURA. I think you know I do not eat uncooked fruit. (*She crosses L. Bus. hits SIR ANTHONY on legs with her walking-stick. Sits sofa.*) This brings me to the principal object of my visit. It's the meeting.

(*SIR ANTHONY moves by back of settee to fire.*)

MILDRED (*sitting in chair L. of table R.C., vacantly*). The meeting, dear?

LAURA. Yes. The meeting of the Society.

MILDRED. What Society?

LAURA. The League of Educative Science.

JOAN. What is that, if anything?

DENIS. Stinks?

MILDRED. Denny! Denny!

HAROLD. He means chemistry, Miss Meakin.

LAURA. But I do not mean chemistry. I mean Social Science.

DENIS. What on earth's that?

HAROLD. I will explain, Miss Meakin; don't bother. I'm very good at explaining things.

LAURA. Thank you; I am quite capable of explaining myself. (*Turning to SIR ANTHONY*). One of our activities is to instruct the mothers of the village in the scientific rearing of children.

DENIS. What do you instruct the grandmothers of the village in? Sucking eggs?

LAURA (*ignoring him*). I wonder if I can interest you, Sir Anthony.

SIR ANTHONY. You interest me very much. What else does the Society do ?

LAURA. It maintains Recreation Centres, where children are taught to amuse themselves rationally and scientifically.

JOAN. Poor little mites ! (*At back of settee.*)

LAURA. The Annual Meeting is to be held this day three weeks. I want to have it in this house, Mildred.

MILDRED. Oh, dear ! I mean, certainly. What date will that be ?

LAURA. The fifteenth.

MILDRED. I have a feeling that something is happening on that date already.

DENIS. I should jolly well think something is happening. The Regatta !

MILDRED (*relieved*). Ah ! Then you see, dear——

LAURA (*very definite*). That is why I selected that date.

DENIS. Is the Society going to teach the crews how to row ?

LAURA. I have selected that date because everybody in the district will be here. The Regatta ends about half-past five, and nothing happens after that, except a lot of unnecessary eating and drinking, until the fireworks commence at nine. (*She rises.*) Then it is settled that we meet here, Mildred, on the fifteenth, at five-thirty ?

MILDRED (*resignedly*). I suppose so, dear.

LAURA. Thank you. (*As LAURA moves to go they all heave a sigh of relief. LAURA moves to exit at window and then comes back.*) We haven't got a chairman yet. Will you be here then, Sir Anthony ?

DENIS and JOAN (*together*). No !

MILDRED (*looks at DENIS and JOAN*). I hope Uncle Tony will be here. But we don't want to commit him to public appearances, Laura : he's having a holiday.

LAURA. Well, I shall see. Good morning, Mildred.

(MILDRED rises.)

You shouldn't wear blue ; it doesn't suit you. I have spoken to you about it before.

MILDRED. Thank you very much.

LAURA. Oh, that's all right. (*Exit through windows.*)

(MILDRED goes up to windows.)

JOAN (*rolling her eyes*). Old maids' children !

DENIS. Social stinks !

HAROLD. She's divine.

DENIS. She's pathetic.

MILDRED. Now don't be uncharitable. Laura is a very good woman. I wish I had her courage.

DENIS. I wish I had her moustache !

JOAN. What do *you* think of her League, Uncle Tony ?

SIR ANTHONY. There's quite a vogue for that sort of interference with other people's comfort nowadays. How you can educate

children to make mud pies, or play hopscotch, or drown kittens in a canal, rationally and scientifically, beats me. Still, it may keep them out of worse mischief.

JOAN. Who? The children?

SIR ANTHONY (*chuckling*). No. *The League!*

MILDRED (*coming down to table R.C.*). Now then, Uncle Tony, don't *you* turn against me. Joan, dear, ring the bell. Children, go and get the boat ready. You will find the luncheon-baskets in the hall. We will start in half an hour.

(*HAROLD rises and goes to dinner wagon R.*)

DENIS. All right, mother. Bags, old soul, you've eaten enough.

HAROLD. But I say—

DENIS. You're a gross feeder. Come along.

(*DENIS pulls HAROLD away from the dinner wagon, and they both exit R., followed by JOAN, who takes tobacco-jar from breakfast-table R.C.*)

(*Enter two maids to clear breakfast table as quickly as possible. One of them also takes off dinner-wagon and they both exit into dining-room R.*)

(*MILDRED watches the children off, and then stands by head of table listening to SIR ANTHONY.*)

SIR ANTHONY. You are a happy woman, Mildred. (*Sits on sofa.*)

MILDRED. Yes, I am a happy woman. Who wouldn't be, with my children? But I am a lonely woman, in one way.

SIR ANTHONY. Your married life was very short?

MILDRED. Yes.

SIR ANTHONY. Practically all I know is what was contained in the letter you wrote to me twenty-one years ago, asking me to be Denny's godfather. After that the next news that I heard was that you had lost your husband through the sinking of a Cape liner. The "Helianthus," wasn't it?

MILDRED (*quietly*). Yes.

SIR ANTHONY. And now, when I come home, after thirty years, to adopt the calling of an Anglo-Indian has-been, I find you here—settled in the peaceful, sleepy heart of England, with three delightful children, in a house which is obviously the social centre of the neighbourhood.

MILDRED. People have been very kind. I fancy they like my children.

SIR ANTHONY (*smiling*). Well, we'll leave it at that. Tell me more about your husband. I know you like to speak of him.

MILDRED. How do you know? (*Crosses to sofa and sits beside him.*)

SIR ANTHONY. Joan was my informant.

MILDRED. I met him for the first time in Wynberg Hospital, just outside Cape Town. I was a young girl then, with an adventur-



ous disposition and enough money to make me independent of everybody. I had gone out to Cape Town at the outbreak of the South African War, and was trying to make myself useful in the nursing line. Denis—that was his name—was a wounded officer.

SIR ANTHONY. What was his regiment?

MILDRED. Somebody's Irregular Horse. I am not very clever at military terms, I am afraid. We were married at once, and I lived at Cape Town for more than three years. Of course he wasn't with me all the time. At last we sailed for home.

SIR ANTHONY. You were on the "Helianthus" too?

MILDRED. Oh, yes. The war had been over quite a long time. There were some soldiers on board—time-expired men going home to be demobilised, or whatever you call it. We had little Denis and Joan with us, of course. Molly wasn't born until three months later. One foggy night off Teneriffe we collided with another ship. . . . We nearly cut her in two. (*She shudders.*)

SIR ANTHONY. I remember the story now. The other ship was a small collier. She sank immediately, didn't she?

MILDRED. Yes. We hardly even saw her. Our ship was crowded; but there was no panic to speak of, though we began to settle down pretty quickly. Some of the boats were so overloaded that they were swamped, and a lot of poor people went down in them. I was very helpless at the time, but everybody was wonderful to me. They put me into one of the biggest boats, with the two children. We were picked up by a tramp steamer two days later, not much the worse.

SIR ANTHONY. And your husband?

MILDRED. He perished—saving other people's lives.

(*There is a brief pause.*)

SIR ANTHONY. He must have been a gallant gentleman.

MILDRED. He was. (*With curious intensity.*) And it is on his standard that I have tried to bring up my children. I am not a clever woman, or a strong woman; so when I am in doubt or difficulty, I ask myself: What would Denis have done? And I have trained my children to ask themselves:—"What would our father have done?" I think that has been a real help to them. It's not easy for young people to keep to the right line in these days, Uncle Tony. Have you realized that?

SIR ANTHONY. You mean they have more liberty—more licence?

MILDRED. Yes; especially girls. Joan could get into all sorts of mischief if she wanted to; and I think she sometimes does want to. But I have tried to teach her what her father would have taught her—that it would not be playing the game if she took advantage of the liberty I give her to do anything common or unclean. Am I right?

SIR ANTHONY. Most certainly.

MILDRED. She's a very modern child. She's terribly outspoken about other people, and utterly reticent about herself. And of

course she is quite confident that she can manage her own affairs without assistance. She laughs at me and my cherished traditions.

SIR ANTHONY (*chuckling*). Ancestor worship, eh?

MILDRED. She's quite different from Molly. (*She is fairly launched now.*) Molly is a particularly satisfactory child to have. She positively enjoys confiding in her mother.

SIR ANTHONY. A rare little bird, in these days.

MILDRED. Of course the other two laugh, and say that Molly is my pet; but she's not!

SIR ANTHONY. Oh, no!

MILDRED. Certainly not. Only (*softly*) she seems to belong to me more than the other two. You see she came to me after I became a widow. That somehow makes me feel solely responsible for her. No, Molly's no trouble. (*She sighs—rather worried.*) It's Denny I am most anxious about. He's so easily led by other people. He's a nice boy; but he's terribly weak—especially where a pretty face is concerned.

SIR ANTHONY. Did you ever know a man who wasn't?

MILDRED. Were you?

SIR ANTHONY. I was—and am! (*He rises and kisses her hand, crosses R.C.*) Denny will settle down. Don't set too high a standard for him. Men aren't naturally virtuous like women, you know.

MILDRED. Do you really think that?

SIR ANTHONY. I should say so! I greatly fear the heavenly choir will prove to be composed almost entirely of sopranos. Denny's as good as most of us. Don't worry, my dear.

MILDRED. I try not to.

SIR ANTHONY. On the contrary, you should rejoice. Your children are a real credit to you.

MILDRED. To their father!

SIR ANTHONY (*shaking his finger, taking newspaper from table R.*). Ancestor worship again! (*They both laugh.*) I am now going into the garden to compose a suitable birthday homily for Master Denny. I don't think it need be a long one. (*Goes to window.*) My chief difficulty will be to find a suitable text.

MILDRED. I will come and help you to find him. Then I must come back and collect a few umbrellas and waterproofs. (*Goes to window.*) I know quite well that no one in this house will do it if I don't—and you know what an English summer day can be!

(MILDRED goes out through window to L., followed by SIR ANTHONY.)

(SIMMONDS enters from dining-room R. with table-centre, which she puts on table; then she puts arm-chair into the dining-room, also small chair. Then puts arm-chair from the head of table up R. by window. She then straightens table-centre on table. DENIS enters from staircase R. and creeps down to SIMMONDS and puts his hands over her eyes.)

SIMMONDS. Oh! It's you, Mr. Denny dear!

DENIS (*imitating her*). Yes, it's me, Miss Simmonds dear! (*He takes her in his arms; she submits quite passively. They both sigh.*) Did you give me that horseshoe present?

SIMMONDS. Yes, sir.

DENIS (*correcting her*). Yes, dear!

SIMMONDS (*obediently*). Yes—dear! Did you like it, dear?

DENIS. I thought it was topping. Annie, you are a little darling!

SIMMONDS. Thank you, sir—dear!

DENIS. Do you know, I can't resist you!

SIMMONDS. Oh! (*She buries her face in his shoulder.*)

DENIS. I simply can't resist anyone who's fair and fluffy! (*Touches her hair.*)

SIMMONDS (*looking up reproachfully*). Just any one?

DENIS (*hastily*). I don't love them, of course.

(SIR ANTHONY and MILDRED appear at window.)

I only love you!

SIMMONDS (*eagerly*). Do you?

DENIS. Don't I? (*He kisses her affectionately.*)

SIR ANTHONY. Ahem!

(*The pair look up.* SIMMONDS gives a cry: "Oh! Oh!" and runs off into dining-room R.)

I have found my text. (*Crosses to L.C.*)

(MILDRED comes slowly down R.C. to DENIS.)

MILDRED (*much distressed*). Oh, Denny, Denny!

DENIS. Oh, mother, mother! I wonder why God made all girls so pretty!

MILDRED (*rapidly recovering her placid composure*). I am sorry you did that, old man. Simmons is a feather-headed little thing, but a very decent girl. Now she will have to go, and I may find it difficult to get her as good a place as this. Wasn't it a little bit selfish?

DENIS. It's awfully hard to resist them, mother, especially when they are—

MILDRED. I know, dear. But is it the game? Is it up to the standard? You know the standard I mean?

(*She goes slowly up the staircase R. but looks back appealingly at SIR ANTHONY as if asking him to say something.*)

SIR ANTHONY (*looking whimsically at DENIS*). We will now improve the occasion!

DENIS (*at head of table—a little fretfully*). Uncle Tony, don't you think mother's standards are a bit too high?

SIR ANTHONY. Women's standards are always higher than



men's, Denny. That is why, when they fall from them, they come down more heavily than we do.

DENIS. But the standards she sets up for me are supposed to be my father's standards, and things have changed since his time. Very few of my friends seem to have any standards at all: they have a lot of fun, instead. (*Ruefully.*) It's a rotten job, being a righteous man in a wicked world.

SIR ANTHONY. Are you quite sure it is such a wicked world, Denny?

DENIS. Look at it!

SIR ANTHONY. If this world were as wicked as it would have you believe, it would have perished of utter corruption centuries ago. Humanity—the sort of humanity that you and I mix with—isn't really depraved. It's only timid.

DENIS. Timid?

SIR ANTHONY. Yes—timid and sheep-like. Denny, there are far more good people walking this earth pretending to be bad than bad people pretending to be good. There's nothing makes a poor human sheep feel so safe as dressing up like a wolf. Scratch a devil of a fellow, and in nine cases out of ten you will find a man with the soul of a churchwarden doing his darnedest to avoid being found out! (*Crosses to DENIS c.*) So never be discouraged by appearances. There! There's my birthday homily safely off my chest! Now, (*he produces an envelope from his pocket*) here you will find a small cheque, which my banker may or may not cash——

DENIS. Oh, I say, Uncle Tony; thanks most awfully!

SIR ANTHONY. And all good luck to you in life, Denny! May the gods give you just two things——

(*Takes DENIS's arm and both cross L.C.*)

—rather more work than you can comfortably do, and an absolutely reliable sense of humour. They are about all that a man really needs in this world. And—always play the game by your mother.

DENIS. I will, Uncle!

SIR ANTHONY. That's a good boy.

DENIS. And I am sorry about that little girl. It was a mouldy thing to do. I am afraid I have done it once or twice before. I feel an awful rotter sometimes. I sort of give way to things suddenly. Luckily, with my family history-sheet, it can't be anything very deep.

SIR ANTHONY. You regard your malady as functional, not organic, eh?

DENIS. I don't know what you mean, sir, but I'm sure you're right. (*Drops down to fireplace.*)

SIR ANTHONY (*goes to staircase R. and calls*). Mildred!

MILDRED. Yes, Uncle Tony? (*Coming downstairs.*)

SIR ANTHONY. This young gentleman wants you to give him the kiss of pardon.

(DENIS goes up to meet his mother and gives her a hug.)

DENIS. Simmonds is quite safe, Mother, from now on.

MILDRED. You dear boy!

SIR ANTHONY. Ha! Now we're all feeling better. (*Drops down front of table to L.C.*)

(*Enter JOAN from dining-room R.*)

JOAN. Aren't you people ready yet?

(*There is a chorus of "Yes."*)

MILDRED. I shall be ready in a moment. Take Uncle Tony down to the boat, and make him comfortable. (*Exit R.*)

(JOAN and SIR ANTHONY meet at window.)

(HAROLD enters from dining-room R. laden with punt cushions, and two luncheon baskets, and paddle for canoe. He goes below table and up the C. to window.)

HAROLD. Let me know if I can carry anything for you, Mrs. Cradock.

JOAN. Come along, Uncle Tony.

HAROLD. I will explain to you how the electric launch works, sir.

SIR ANTHONY. I was afraid you would. (*They both exit R. through window.*)

(JOAN sees that DENIS is standing R.C. in a rather characteristic pose of his, industriously caressing a scarcely visible moustache with the tips of his fingers. He is gazing pensively towards the exit R. through which SIMMONDS has just disappeared.)

JOAN (*tiptoeing, coming close to DENIS R.C.*). It's still there. Only the third hair on the left-hand side is slightly out of place. Shall I——?

(DENIS starts, drops his hand.)

DENIS. You think you're jolly clever.

(JOAN runs out of the window, followed by DENIS laughing.)

(*There is a short pause. Then SIMMONDS enters R., followed by DALE CONWAY, who crosses to C. CONWAY is an attractive-looking man of about 45, dressed in a lounge suit—which is not quite right. It is smart, yet rather the worse for wear. There is a slight suggestion of flashy seediness about his whole appearance. He looks round the room with an air of great interest.*)

SIMMONDS (*whose manner just now suggests restrained tearfulness*). What name shall I say, sir?

CONWAY. Mrs. Cradock won't know it, but you can say Captain Conway. Captain Dale Conway.

SIMMONDS. Yes, sir. (*Going R.*)

CONWAY. Are you in distress, my dear?

SIMMONDS. Oh no, sir.

CONWAY. I always like to help little girls in distress—especially when they're fair and fluffy.

SIMMONDS. Thank you, sir. (*Exit R.*)

(CONWAY chuckles to himself, and strolls about the room, goes to table L.C., lights cigarette.)

(MILDRED enters R. At the sight of CONWAY's back she starts and puts her hand to her heart.)

MILDRED. Denis! You!!

CONWAY. Good morning, Mildred! The bad penny has turned up!

MILDRED. Where have you been? Where have you come from?

CONWAY. Recently, from California. Generally speaking, "from going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." That's a quotation from Scripture, which you may or may not regard as apposite.

MILDRED. For God's sake don't be flippant just now! Tell me, what do you want?

CONWAY. Want? What do you think I want? I want the comforts of home.

MILDRED. You shan't stay here. Where's that woman?

CONWAY. Which of them?

MILDRED. That woman you took away with you in that boat, with its bribed crew.

CONWAY. Oh, that lady? As a matter of fact she took me away. She bribed the crew too; I had no money. I never have. I'm afraid I haven't seen her for more than fifteen years. She proved to be a quite impossible person. At present I am absolutely heart-whole. In the words of the poet, "All that I ask is love; all that I want is you." (*He turns and flicks the ash off his cigarette, then comes across to her.*) Milly!

MILDRED. Keep your distance!

CONWAY. Certainly! Could I have a little refreshment? May I ring? Thank you. (*He crosses to the bell by the fireplace and rings it.*)

MILDRED (*standing calm and immovable on the other side of the room*). Keep your distance, and keep silent while I speak to you! I am not afraid of you. After what you did that night on that ship—

CONWAY. Dear, dear! Feminine jealousy lives long, doesn't it? (*Sits on settee L.*)



MILDRED. I am not speaking about that poor creature. She was welcome to you. I am thinking of something else.

(Enter SIMMONDS R.)

SIMMONDS. Did you ring, ma'am ?

MILDRED. Yes. Will you bring the whisky and soda for—Captain Conway.

SIMMONDS. Yes, ma'am. (Exit dining-room R.)

CONWAY. Well, what was it you were thinking of ?

MILDRED. There were soldiers on board—a company of British soldiers.

CONWAY. A half-company, I think. Well ?

MILDRED. When the collision came, you, an officer and gentleman——

CONWAY (*quickly*). I wasn't a real officer, you know, only a squadron commander in some Irregular Horse—some very Irregular Horse ! Their irregularity, especially off duty, was quite unique.

MILDRED (*steadily*). You, an officer and gentleman, left those men to die !

CONWAY. They were not my men ; I wasn't even travelling on duty, but on leave ; and in mufti ; and they had their own officer.

MILDRED. You were the senior officer on board.

CONWAY. Correct ; and being senior officer I took the trouble to see if the officer in question had paraded his men on the portion of the deck provided for such an emergency. Finding he had done so, I felt at liberty to go to the help of other people.

MILDRED (*scornfully*). People ? Person !

CONWAY (*calmly*). As you please. On occasions of this kind the procedure is quite simple and invariable—women and children first ! I observed that you and the two children were being well looked after ; in fact, it made me a little jealous to see what a lot of people were doing it. So I took steps to ensure the safety of the only other woman on board whom I happened to know. After that, I considered that I was entitled to look after myself.

MILDRED (*as steadily as ever*). It was your duty to stay on board.

CONWAY. And be drowned ?

MILDRED. And take your chance with the other soldiers.

CONWAY. It's a nice point. Personally, I don't agree with you, but (*politely*) of course you are entitled to your own opinion. As a matter of fact, I believe most of them were saved. I made a point of finding out afterwards. I'm not a bad fellow really. Still, naturally it would have suited your book if I had been drowned. Well, I was. I consulted your convenience to the last, Milly. Indeed, I think you might be a bit more grateful about it.

MILDRED. What do you mean ?

CONWAY. What I say. When I was cast away that night Denis Cradock ceased to exist. When I was cast up again—when we were rescued by a passing ship a day later—I gave my name as Arthur

Swann. (*With great solemnity.*) The other poor gentleman, Captain Cradock, has never been heard of since!

MILDRED. You called yourself Swann? Not Conway?

CONWAY. No. Dale Conway was one of my later incarnations. Anyhow, Denis Cradock disappeared from the pages of history—to the profound relief of his creditors, who realized that they had touched bottom at last. *Et voilà tout!* (*He looks at her and smiles.*)

(*She remains standing immovable.*)

Now I suppose you want to hear all about my adventures since then?

MILDRED. No, thank you.

(*Enter SIMMONDS R.—crosses in front of table. She puts down the salver and decanter on a small table beside the sofa, then gets syphon from sideboard up L. MILDRED sits L. of table R.C.*)

(*With cordiality.*) Do tell me all about your adventures, Captain Conway. What happened to you in the war? I suppose you rejoined at once?

CONWAY. Indeed, yes. I had a most interesting time.

MILDRED. What Front were you on?

CONWAY. I was on the Western Front to begin with. (*To SIMMONDS, who has just placed the syphon beside him.*) Thank you, my dear.

MILDRED. Were you in the Cavalry again?

CONWAY. No. This time they thought I was a little too old. Absurd, of course; but one has to accept these things.

(*SIMMONDS crosses at back of table R.C. and exits R.*)

They put me into the Army Pay Department.

MILDRED. How dangerous—for the Army!

(*CONWAY rises and helps himself to whisky.*)

CONWAY (*quite unruffled*). Never allow your sense of fair play to be obscured by a craving for epigram, Milly! It may have been dangerous for the Army, but it was equally dangerous for me. I took all sorts of risks; in fact, my fondness for risks landed me in serious trouble.

MILDRED. A surprise visit from the Auditor, I suppose?

CONWAY. Now don't be catty, Milly! What happened was this. I was appointed Field Cashier to a district in Belgium. One day I drove up quite close to the Line during an intensive bombardment with a consignment of money—the pay of a Division, in fact. I had it in a satchel on the seat beside me—all French paper money, of course. Unfortunately, when I arrived at Divisional Headquarters, my satchel was empty.

MILDRED. You surprise me!

CONWAY. In some way the flap had come open, and owing to the high rate of speed at which I was travelling, all the money had blown away.

MILDRED. Where to ?

CONWAY. All over the countryside.

MILDRED. Did they find any of it ?

CONWAY. None. Most of Belgium is under water in winter.

MILDRED. What sentence did you get ?

CONWAY. Milly, I left that Court without a stain on my character. But I was ordered home, to report for less arduous duties. On my way to London I suddenly came to the conclusion that I had done my bit.

MILDRED. You could afford to !

CONWAY. So I changed my name again, got out of uniform, and booked a passage to New York.

MILDRED. You could afford that, too !

CONWAY. Your surmise is correct. Well, I may say, (*sits on sofa*) with all modesty, that I was a great success in America. I lectured on my experiences in battle ; I appeared at Red Cross fêtes, and concerts in aid of refugees ; I was made an honorary member of prominent clubs, and visited everywhere. There are some delightful country houses on Long Island. I was quite a little pet. You would have been proud of me, Milly. I organized charities of my own, and they prospered exceedingly. Yes, I must say, in nineteen fifteen America was an absolutely ideal resort for a wounded hero.

MILDRED (*softening for a moment*). Were you wounded ?

CONWAY. Oh yes. Shot through the legs—or was it the lungs ? I had been gassed, too. When lecturing I used to stop and cough sometimes. That was a great help. Americans are intensely kind-hearted people. And their generosity is amazing. It didn't matter how preposterous your particular charity might be ; you could always get money for it. But, of course, the market was soon spoiled. The game was so attractive that blundering outsiders butted in and ruined it. Then America came into the war herself, and that gave our military authorities an official footing in the country. Official and officious—damned officious ! Do you know, they very nearly conscripted me for the British Army, as a British shirker taking refuge on American soil ! Me ! who had done my bit already.

MILDRED. Unfortunately, you could not afford to give that fact away.

CONWAY. Precisely ! So I trekked further west—to California. I worked in the movies there.

MILDRED. What drove you out of California ?

CONWAY. That very thing—work ! As you know, the sight of work always makes me feel faint and giddy. I am such a good rider and swimmer that I was constantly being detailed for tiring



film stunts, like battles and shipwrecks. It wasn't a job for a gentleman at all. And—there were other inconveniences.

MILDRED. Some one's husband began to make trouble, I suppose?

CONWAY (*rising and crossing c.*). On the contrary, he was much too accommodating. He offered to retire permanently in my favour. My dear Milly, the looseness of the marriage-tie in some of those Western States is a public scandal. Lay a finger on it, and it comes undone in your hand: and you find yourself roped in as Husband Number Two before you know where you are. No; I wasn't having any. So I left. And here I am! There—frankly, freely, and without extenuation—you have the history of your rolling stone, who has just dropped with a refreshing splash into this sleepy little backwater of yours. (*He raises his glass to her.*) *A toi!* (*He finishes his glass and sets it down on table head of settee.*) Now, what about it? (*Sits on sofa.*)

MILDRED (*rising and crossing L., looking down on him*). And you have been going through the world all these years—lying, cheating, pilfering?

CONWAY. Not at all! I usually gave excellent value for what I received.

MILDRED. Received?

CONWAY. Well—acquired, if you like! Come, come, Milly, don't be a little hypocrite. You know my views about life. The world's my oyster—my big, fat, luscious, not particularly sensitive oyster. All mankind are fair game. If a man is fool enough to let his pocket be picked, he has no one to blame but himself. If ever I meet a man clever enough to pick my pocket I shall allow him to do so with great pleasure. What could be fairer than that?

(*She rises and turns impatiently up to window.*)

Life, my dear Milly, is not a picnic—as you in this up-river existence of yours appear to imagine. It's a campaign—a campaign for most of us against power and place and privilege. What have I ever had to help me in the battle of life? (*Rises and goes up to window.*) Wealth, birth, influence? Nothing of the kind! Nothing but my five wits and a perfect digestion.

MILDRED. A thick skin. (*Moves down to R.*)

CONWAY. A thick skin comes under the heading of a perfect digestion. The first symptom of indigestion is remorse. No—my wits and my digestion have been my sole weapons during life; and I flatter myself I have never used them otherwise than with consideration.

MILDRED. Good heavens! (*Drops down to R. corner.*)

CONWAY. I have never been cruel. Cruelty revolts me. I once half-killed a man in the streets of Johannesburg for ill-treating a pony. You remember?

MILDRED. Yes, I remember.

CONWAY (*down to L. of table R.C.*). Have I ever been cruel to you,

Milly ? Did I ever lay a finger on you, or speak a harsh word to you during the whole of our married life ?

MILDRED. No. But you worked night and day, all the same, to break my spirit. You failed, though !

CONWAY. Well, let's get down to brass tacks. Are you still well off ? Do you still possess that comfortably invested little fortune which you always insisted I married you for ?

MILDRED. We have sufficient.

CONWAY. Ah ! In that case I may as well tell you that father has come home—to spend his declining years with his wife and his son and his daughter. The prodigal has returned. Serve the veal !

MILDRED. You can't stay here.

CONWAY. Why not ?

MILDRED. You dare not !

CONWAY. Dare not ? There's nothing that anybody can really get hold of against me. I have always seen to that.

MILDRED (*bitterly*). Yes ; I expect you have.

CONWAY. Anyhow, I shall risk it. Now, Milly, be sensible ! Why not acknowledge me as your miraculously restored husband, who lost his memory owing to exposure in the wreck, and has just found you again ? What a delicious romance for this backwater ! Why can't I stay ? Why can't we settle down to a real Indian summer together ?

MILDRED (*steadily*). You are going away from here, and never coming back.

CONWAY. Oh ! Is it permitted to ask why ?

MILDRED. I will tell you why. Because I have brought up my children to believe that their father was a decent man.

CONWAY. Well, why not let them go on believing it ?

MILDRED. I mean them to. That is why you are going away, my friend.

CONWAY (*laughing*). *Touché ! (Crosses to fireplace.)*

MILDRED (*comes c.*). Do you think that you could live in the same house with them for a week, and not be found out ?

CONWAY. I flatter myself I could. I can be very engaging when I like. You know that, Milly.

MILDRED (*turning away from him*). God pity me, I do. (*Goes up c.*)

CONWAY. Anyhow, here I am, and here I stay ! What are you going to do about that ?

MILDRED (*whose composure is beginning to desert her*). I will have you turned out of the house.

CONWAY. Milly ! Milly ! How could you have your lawful husband thrown out of his own house ? (*Sits in chair L. corner.*)

MILDRED. Lawful ? The law can release me from you to-day—and shall !

CONWAY. No, it won't !

MILDRED. Why ?

CONWAY. You won't ask it to.

MILDRED. Why not?

CONWAY. Pride! Pride! What would the Smiths and the Browns say? What would the Robinsons say? What would Laura Meakin say? I have been making inquiries about you, Milly. You are highly respected here. You have built up quite a reputation. You won't sacrifice that.

MILDRED (*turning on him passionately*). Can't you understand? I will sacrifice *everything*—all that I have worked for all these years—to rid my children of the contamination of your presence.

CONWAY (*rising and crossing R.C.*). Oh, so that's it? The children? *They* are your hostages to fortune, are they? But think a minute, Milly! They're my children too, you know. They may take my side. Joan, for instance. Joan must be almost a woman by now. Women always have a soft spot for a soldier of fortune. Like mother, like daughter—eh?

MILDRED. That cuts both ways. Joan is my daughter, and therefore no fool. All she needs from me is a warning. All I needed twenty-two years ago was a warning—only there was no one to give it to me!

CONWAY. Well, our dear son, then? He would sympathize with my propensities. Like father, like son, you know!

MILDRED (*to herself*). Like father, like— (*Evidently a new and terrifying thought has struck her—passionately.*) Never! Never! Never! (*She clasps her face in her hands and goes up towards window, for a moment she is panic-stricken.*)

CONWAY. Now look here, Milly! Don't make a scene, there's a good girl. (*Up to L. top corner of table.*) You know I hate scenes. Listen to me. I am not the fellow to put anyone in a tight corner. It seems to me that we can settle this little matter in two ways. Either you can announce to the family that father has come home, and we can all settle down and live happily ever after; or else, if you are ashamed of poor old broken-down me— After all, I suppose I might prove a drag on your social ambitions—

MILDRED. Oh!

CONWAY (*continuing calmly*). Why not introduce me as Captain Dale Conway, who has just returned from South Africa after twenty years, and has unexpectedly run across you, the wife of his old friend Cradock? I stay on for a little while as your guest. I find the locality delightful; I decide to settle here; I take a little house close by. Of course *you* take it really; but I never give a lady away!

(*She makes a furious exclamation.*)

Now don't interrupt me! I mingle with the local nobility and gentry and beauty and fashion, as your little *protégé*. There must be some very jolly week-end parties in some of these big places round here. I wonder if they play bridge at all? Possibly one



might get a little Baccarat. In that way I could make a humble but honest living, supplemented by an occasional fiver from you ; and at the same time gratify my paternal yearnings—from a respectful distance, of course ! There, what do you say to that ? The bargain is in your favour ; but I never could haggle ! (*Crosses to and sits in chair L. corner.*)

(Suddenly MILDRED whirls round and comes L.C., stands facing him. She speaks rapidly, but decisively.)

MILDRED. Listen to me ! I am a Christian woman, and I say my prayers every night and every morning. Every morning I thank God for my children, and every night I thank Him again for them ; and I thank Him after that for having removed them from your influence just at the moment in their lives when you were beginning to be really poisonous to them. Well, God has sent you back to me ! I don't know why, but I suppose there's a reason. All I know is that God can't possibly mean you to stay with us ; but for the present I can't see my way out. I am groping, in sudden darkness. But one thing is clear to me—as clear as daylight. The children must never know that you are their father. Thank you for warning me of that !

CONWAY. Oh, I warned you ?

MILDRED. Yes. You said—"Like father, like son !" That's just it ! It's Denny I am thinking of—Denny. He's weak, horribly weak—but so far he's not vicious. He's a decent sort of boy, and his great stand-by so far is his belief that his father was a decent sort of man, and that he takes after his father. If he gets to know the sort of person his father is—as he would in no time—his chief prop and stay will be withdrawn from him, he will give up trying, and go the same way as you ! And to save him from that, I will fight till I drop ! So I accept your second alternative——

CONWAY. Ah !

MILDRED. —till I see my way clear to getting rid of you altogether.

CONWAY. How are you going to do that, my dear ?

MILDRED (*crosses to R.C.*). I don't know. I haven't been able to think yet ; but I will do it. In the last extremity I could shoot you.

CONWAY. Oh, Milly ! (*Laughs and rises.*)

MILDRED. And I wouldn't hesitate to do so ! So don't drive me too hard !

(*Voices are heard outside. DENIS and JOAN appear at window.*)

JOAN (*off stage*). Mum, what on earth are you doing ? We've been waiting hours and hours. (*She sees CONWAY.*) Oh, I beg your pardon !

MILDRED (*smiling—pause*). Come in, children ! I have a real surprise for you. This is Captain Dale Conway, whom I haven't

seen since the South African days. He is just home, and ran across us quite by accident. Come and shake hands.

*(They come down.)*

*(She presents JOAN.)* This is Joan.

*(JOAN crosses L. to corner, shakes hands.)*

CONWAY. How do you do, my dear? I know you, although you don't know me yet!

MILDRED *(presenting DENIS)*. This is Denis.

*(Father and son regard one another for a moment; their attitudes are very similar. Then they shake hands.)*

CONWAY. *(Crossing JOAN.)* How do you do, Denis? *(He looks at MILDRED, smiling.)* He reminds me so much of his father!

DENIS. Did you know my father well, sir?

CONWAY. None better!

JOAN *(dismally)*. More ancestor worship!

*(CONWAY turns and regards her curiously.)*

*(Enter SIMMONDS R.)*

SIMMONDS *(to CONWAY)*. Is your cab to wait, please, sir? *(Below table R.C.)*

CONWAY. Bless me! I forgot all about my cab!

MILDRED. You will stay and spend the day with us, Captain Conway? Send your cab away!

CONWAY. That's very kind; I shall be delighted. We'd better pay the cab off. Did he say how much?

SIMMONDS. He said three-and-six, sir.

CONWAY *(feeling in his pockets)*. I wonder if I have any silver. I don't believe I have. I have got a ten-pound note somewhere. *(He turns to MILDRED.)*

*(She turns away up stage, suddenly realizing what she must expect in future; but DENIS produces a ten-shilling note.)*

DENIS. Here you are, sir! Here's a ten-shilling note!

CONWAY. Thank you, Denis. Don't forget to remind me about this. *(Crossing DENIS, he hands the note to SIMMONDS.)* Tell the man he can keep the change. Now what about the jolly old river? *(He takes DENIS's arm and they walk up to the window talking.)*

CURTAIN.

## ACT II

SCENE.—*Same as Act I.*

(*As the curtain rises, there is a loud burst of applause, and CONWAY is found on his feet speaking to a drawing-room meeting. MILDRED CRADOCK sits with her back turned to the audience, and her head drooping. She is obviously taking things as passively as she can.*)

CONWAY. Well, ladies and gentlemen, I think we have spent a very profitable half-hour.

DENIS. Fifty minutes.

CONWAY. I should like to thank you, on behalf of our friend Miss Meakin—— (*He pauses meaningly.*)

(*No response.*)

—our esteemed friend, Miss Meakin—— (*He pauses again.*)

(DENIS and HAROLD clap languidly three times.)

—for your presence here. I should also like to thank you, with very genuine feeling, for the honour you have done me in inviting me to be your chairman. As I stand here in the presence of that eminent statesman—that retired proconsul of our Eastern Empire—Sir Anthony Fenwick, I feel humbly conscious that *he* ought to be presiding.

(DENIS and HAROLD both applaud. JOAN hushes them.)

LAURA. Order!

CONWAY. But you have not only made me chairman of this meeting; you have appointed me treasurer of your Society. I know, of course, that your confidence in me is derived in a large measure from the affection and esteem in which you hold my very dear friend and sponsor, our hostess of this afternoon. (*There is loud applause.*) Still, sentiment is one thing and business is another. Let me say here and now, that I cannot accept this responsible post—unless the accounts of the Society are regularly and properly audited by a firm of chartered accountants.

SIR ANTHONY. Hear, hear!

CONWAY. I am glad to be backed by such an eminent authority. Luckily, we need not go far for our auditor. By the greatest good fortune, my old and valued friend, Mr. Augustus Moon, of the widely known firm of chartered accountants of that name in London,

Messrs. Moon, Moon and Moon, happens to be present in our midst this afternoon. As an old racing—rowing—man, he has been attracted here by the Regatta, in company with Mrs. Moon. Mr. Moon has very kindly undertaken to examine the accounts of the Society without charge of any kind. Mr. Moon, on behalf of the members of this Society, I thank you!

*(There is loud applause.)*

*(MR. MOON rises.)*

MR. MOON. Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, and feller sports——

CONWAY. Later on, old man, if you don't mind. Now, ladies and gentlemen, to get down to brass tacks—if you will permit a colloquialism, Miss Meakin?——

LAURA *(genially)*. As many as you like, Captain Conway!

*(DENIS and HAROLD are immensely amused.)*

CONWAY *(consulting paper)*. The sums actually handed in in the form of subscriptions and donations up to date amount to eighty-seven pounds eleven shillings and fourpence. That is a very gratifying total.

*(Murmurs of "Hear, hear!")*

Now, I have a little suggestion to make. I am going to ask Miss Meakin to give all these cheques and postal orders to me.

*(Mild sensation.)*

I shall send them to my bank, to be placed to my private account—to be my very own property! In return, I shall write a cheque for one hundred pounds, and shall present it to myself, as treasurer, for the use of the Society. If you will allow me to do this, you will be conferring a very real honour on your chairman. May I do this?

LAURA. Indeed, yes!

*(There is loud applause.)*

CONWAY. Just one point! I may be old-fashioned, but I like frankness. It is not always wise to accept cheques from strangers.

SIR ANTHONY. Hear, hear!

CONWAY. I am delighted that we again see eye to eye, Sir Anthony. I am a stranger!

*(There are murmurs of "No!")*

Yes, I am—a comparative stranger, anyhow! But Mrs. Cradock is no stranger to you. You all know Mrs. Cradock. I also know Mrs. Cradock. I have known her for more years than her appearance would lead you to believe!

*(There is a little polite laughter.)*



I am, therefore, going to ask Mrs. Cradock, when I draw my cheque for the hundred pounds, to write her name on the back of it ; and I venture to think that such an endorsement will make that cheque as good as a Bank of England note. Mrs. Cradock, will you do this for me ? (*MILDRED nods her head.*) Thank you ! (*Applause.*) That, I think, concludes the business of the meeting. Let me thank you from the bottom of my heart for your generosity. (*Collects notes and puts them in his pocket-book and puts it in his pocket.*) Now I think we might disperse. I know one or two gentlemen present have to go and collect Regatta prizes. (*People all rise to go.*) Is there any other business ?

(*LAURA whispers to CONWAY—"Sir Thomas Mobberley."*)

CONWAY. Sir Thomas Mobberley.

SIR THOMAS (*rising ponderously*). Ladies and gentlemen, as your chosen representative in the Legislative Assembly of this country—in other words, as your local Member of Parliament—I feel it my task to—er my—privilege—to propose a vote of thanks to—our chairman.

(*Murmurs of "Hear, hear !"*)

My duties at Westminster do not permit of my being present in this district, except at somewhat distant—er—distant——

HAROLD (*helpfully*). Intervals ?

SIR THOMAS (*a little annoyed*). Er—periods of time. This circumstance has prevented me heretofore from making the acquaintance of our chairman ; but let me say that I have none the less been most favourably impressed with the manner in which he has conducted this—er—this—er——

HAROLD. Meeting ?

SIR THOMAS. Gathering. And it is with the greatest pleasure that I rise to offer a few remarks before proposing a vote of thanks to our friend for the extremely efficient manner in which he has occupied the—er—the—er——

HAROLD. Chair ?

SIR THOMAS. Presidential rostrum, this afternoon. In that connection I am reminded of an adventure which occurred to me personally, in the spring of eighteen-ninety-seven, or possibly the late autumn of eighteen-ninety-six, while sojourning with Lady Mobberley—Mrs. Mobberley, as she was then—at an hotel in Rome.

LADY MOBBERLEY. Naples, Tom.

SIR THOMAS. I think it was Rome.

LADY MOBBERLEY. Naples.

SIR THOMAS. Rome ! My dear, I have it on my paper. I'm sure it——

DENIS. Hit him with this. (*Picks up tobacco-jar from table R.*)

HAROLD (*rising—speaking rapidly*). Ladies and gentlemen, I rise with the utmost pleasure to second the motion which has been so

eloquently proposed by our worthy Member. And as it is now six o'clock—the statutory hour of six—the hour at which freedom once more reigns upon British soil—I will not delay you any longer, but will take the liberty of putting the motion to the Meeting, to be carried by acclamation.

*(Loud applause, during which SIR THOMAS sits down indignantly. HAROLD also sits down. DENIS pats him on the back.)*

CONWAY *(rising)*. Thank you very much. After the extremely pointed reference by Mr. Harold Bagby to the hour of day, I hasten to announce the meeting is at an end!

*(There is a general uprising. SIR THOMAS and LADY MOBBERLEY go up to window and exit to L. through same. DENIS, HAROLD and MR. MOON put chairs into dining-room. JOAN crosses to her mother C. MILDRED rises and goes up to window. SIR ANTHONY FENWICK puts MILDRED'S chair down L. below fireplace.)*

JOAN. It's a pity you didn't see your first-born win his race, Mother.

MILDRED. I'm dreadfully sorry. But I had to hurry home and get this room ready. Was it very exciting?

JOAN *(going up to window)*. Uncle Tony was excited. *(Exit L. through window.)*

*(MILDRED follows JOAN up to window.)*

SIR ANTHONY. I danced the Cachucha on the towpath. *(Goes up to window.)*

MILDRED. Joan is my self-contained one. What a pity Molly isn't here. She would have been wild with excitement.

SIR ANTHONY. When does she get her holidays?

MILDRED. Not for another three weeks, poor lamb.

*(MILDRED and SIR ANTHONY exit to L. through window.)*

HAROLD *(coming from dining-room and crossing to table to CONWAY)*. Captain Conway, can you spare me a moment, for that little scheme we were discussing?

CONWAY. Any time you like, dear boy. Say in five minutes.

HAROLD. Thanks. Now to break training! *(Exit R. into dining-room. Off stage.)* Come on, Denny; this way to the brewery!

CONWAY. One or two of these cheques are made payable to you, Miss Meakin. Will you endorse them, please?

*(LAURA does so.)*

LAURA. You and I have a good deal of business to transact, haven't we, Captain Conway?

CONWAY. The worst of transacting business with a girl like you,

Miss Meakin, is that I find it impossible to concentrate. Quite the opposite!

LAURA (*coolly*). What is the opposite?

CONWAY. "Dissipate!" (*Rises and looks down on LAURA.*)

LAURA. I am afraid you have done that pretty often, Captain Conway.

CONWAY. I am what women like you have made me. (*Sighing.*)

LAURA (*obviously flattered*). Women like me?

CONWAY. Yes. Have you ever realized the power that a beautiful woman exercises over a man—for good or ill?

LAURA (*primly*). I trust that such powers as I possess have always been exercised for good.

CONWAY (*sadly*). I'm not so sure.

LAURA. Captain Conway!

CONWAY. Beauty and charm are very curious things, Miss Meakin. However lofty her character and ideals may be, a woman like yourself can never foretell the exact nature of the emotion that she will awaken in a man. She may of course inspire him to a life as sublime as her own. On the other hand, she may arouse in him an overwhelming desire to take her in his arms and embrace her.

LAURA. Now you're being naughty. (*She slaps his hand.*)

CONWAY. Not at all. I am paying you the highest compliment in my power. I am talking to you as a woman of the world—a woman who realizes the vital fact, which so many less courageous people ignore, that men are men and women are women.

LAURA. How true that is!

CONWAY. I could not speak to all women like this. I might unnerve them, or puzzle them. Our dear friend Mrs. Cradock, for instance. But nothing affects your nerve—(*LAURA gives him a quick look*)—nerves. Nothing puzzles you, because you are a woman who knows her world, and has always had that world at her feet—her little feet. (*Looks at her feet.*) That is why in this drowsy lethargic atmosphere, I turn to you as to a refreshing fountain—a fountain of youth, an oasis in the desert. May I come to tea to-morrow?

LAURA (*very flattered*). Yes; if you will promise to be good.

CONWAY. I cannot promise to be good, but I can at least undertake to be discreet. By the way, I have secured those oil shares for you. You can give me the cheque after tea to-morrow.

(*MILDRED'S and JOAN'S voice heard off stage L. LAURA hurriedly rises and puts on her gloves.*)

To-morrow, then.

(*CONWAY crosses to fireplace.*)

MILDRED (*speaking as they come on*). Yes, write Molly a nice long letter, dear, and tell her all about the Regatta.

LAURA (*coming to window to MILDRED*). Good-bye, Mildred. I

don't think your servants managed the tea very well. But that's only to be expected, with your poky little dining-room.

MILDRED. I'm sorry, Laura.

LAURA. Good-bye, Joan. If I were your mother, I should rub some of the powder off your nose.

JOAN. If you were my mother, my nose wouldn't be worth powdering.

(JOAN *exit upstairs R.*)

LAURA (*to MILDRED*). Say good-bye to Denis for me. I was surprised at his winning that race. Your children haven't much stamina as a rule, have they, Mildred? And you're looking ten years more than your age to-day. I thought I ought to tell you.

MILDRED. Thank you for not forgetting, dear.

LAURA. Oh, that's all right. (*Exits through window to L.*)

CONWAY (*comes quickly up to MILDRED L.*). Mildred!

MILDRED. Well?

CONWAY. I want to speak to you for a few minutes.

MILDRED. What can you have to say that you have not said already during these three weeks?

(*Enter DENIS, smoking a very large pipe. MILDRED is about to reply to CONWAY when she sees DENIS. She crosses to him.*)

Oh, Denny, what a big pipe!

DENIS. The biggest I've got, Mother. I have just drunk the longest drink I ever drank, and presently I'm going to eat the biggest dinner I ever ate. That's how I feel towards the world at this moment. But I say, Mother, you're not looking too fit. Why not go upstairs and take a rest?

MILDRED. I have rather a headache, dear.

DENIS. It's that rotten pow-pow of Laura's. Lie down for a bit, and then I'll take you out on the river before dinner.

MILDRED. Thank you, dear. (*They go out R. together.*)

(*Enter MR. MOON from dining-room; looks cautiously around.*)

MR. MOON. Where's your little bit, guv'nor?

CONWAY. Who?

MR. MOON. That old dame Meakins.

CONWAY. She has gone home, Moon.

MR. MOON. Got a bit put away, I take it?

CONWAY. She has fourteen thousand pounds, not too tightly invested. Why?

MR. MOON. Are you going to marry her, guv'nor?

CONWAY. No, I am not.

MR. MOON (*playfully*). A nice young bachelor like you! She might do worse. Perhaps you're after that widder, Mrs. Cradock?



CONWAY. You're growing familiar ; drop it ! I have one or two little jobs for you.

MR. MOON (*respectfully*). Yes, sir.

CONWAY. What's your game at present ?

MR. MOON. No game at all, sir. I assure you I'm straight. Quite straight now.

CONWAY. I wonder ! (*He gazes at MR. MOON, who begins to fidget.*) Are you still under police supervision ?

MR. MOON. Oh no, sir !

CONWAY. Still, I suppose there are certain little episodes of the past which, if they did come to light, would make your position an extremely delicate one ?

MR. MOON. They'd make it something chronic, sir.

CONWAY. Do you remember that little club in Jermyn Street—in nineteen thirteen, wasn't it ?

MR. MOON. Yes, sir.

CONWAY. Do the police know anything about your interest in it ?

MR. MOON. No, sir ; nothing !

CONWAY. Well, I won't tell them.

MR. MOON (*humbly*). Thank you, sir.

CONWAY. Still, one good turn deserves another. Perhaps you can help me.

MR. MOON. Certainly, sir.

CONWAY. What do you do for a living now ?

MR. MOON. I do a little on the side.

CONWAY. On the quiet, you mean ?

MR. MOON. Yes, sir ! Baccarat and chemin-de-fer, chiefly.

CONWAY. Anything in the turf line, at present ?

MR. MOON. Very little, sir.

CONWAY. Well, it doesn't matter one way or the other. What are you doing down here ?

MR. MOON. Two of my nieces are here this afternoon, with my wife.

CONWAY. Are they nice girls ?

MR. MOON. Very nice girls, sir. Refined. Nice manners.

CONWAY. Well, I want you to take them along to my bungalow. (*He goes up to the window.*) That's it—the first on the right below the weir. I know at least one young gentleman about here who will be charmed to shake a cocktail for them.

MR. MOON. Very good, sir !

(HAROLD BAGBY *appears* R.)

HAROLD. Oh, sorry ! I thought you might be disengaged now.

CONWAY. I'm as free as air. Come in. Don't go, Moon. Let me see, did you meet Mr. Harold Bagby ?

HAROLD. I don't think we did meet. I'm delighted, I'm sure. I have some knowledge of your profession.

MR. MOON (*suspiciously*). Oh, have you? (*Sits chair L. of table.*)

CONWAY (*at head of table*). Now, Bagby, old man, we can speak freely before Mr. Moon. He is an old friend of mine, and a perfect pundit on turf matters, especially the financial side. Isn't that so, Moon, old man?

MR. MOON. That's right—sir—Conway, old man!

CONWAY (*brings a chair, and HAROLD sits down*). Now, Bagby, I need not waste your time with technical explanations, because I know you are a man of the world and understand these things. (*Sits head of table.*)

HAROLD (*complacently*). Rather!

CONWAY. You have the whole business of backing and laying horses at your finger ends.

HAROLD. Quite! Quite!

CONWAY. That reassures me. Now, Harold, this plan of mine depends mainly on one requisite—capital!

HAROLD. What capital would you require, roughly?

CONWAY. Well—roughly, how much have you got?

HAROLD. I could cough up about four thousand pounds.

CONWAY. I suppose you couldn't go and sit in an east wind, and make it five thousand pounds?

HAROLD (*laughing*). Well, perhaps I might.

CONWAY. That's better. The fact is, I want altogether about twenty thousand. If you can contribute five thousand I will make up the rest—thus giving you a quarter share. We will hand our two cheques to Mr. Moon here.

MR. MOON. They'll be quite safe with me.

HAROLD. What is your plan?

CONWAY. I happen to know of a very useful four-year-old that is about twenty-one pounds better than the handicapper thinks. I can buy this animal for a couple of thousand, on condition that I leave him with his present trainer. We should probably get him in the Cambridgeshire with 7 st. 4.

HAROLD. The Cambridgeshire?

CONWAY. Exactly. The biggest betting race of the year. (*To MR. MOON.*) It's no good going for smaller fry.

MR. MOON. Not the slightest.

CONWAY. We can begin now by taking all the long odds against him, and for practically a small outlay we can stand to win a fortune with him.

HAROLD. But he might not win.

CONWAY. Isn't he quick? Is not he quick, Moon?

MR. MOON. He's too quick for me.

CONWAY. Quite so. As you say, he might not win, and that's where my plan is so sound. I shall put it about all over the place that he is a certainty. The public always love a mystery, and will tumble over one another to back him and we shall be able to hedge all our money, and a bit more, at a very short price, and

stand to win a fortune whatever happens. Do you get me? I see you do.

HAROLD (*vaguely*). Of course, of course.

CONWAY. I knew you would. What do you say?

HAROLD. I'm on! May I write my cheque now?

CONWAY (*turning to MOON*). Do you want it now, Mr. Moon?

MR. MOON (*solemnly*). Well, not urgently; but perhaps it would be best.

CONWAY. I think so too. I may be old-fashioned, but I like to see mutual confidence established at once. I'll tell you what—we'll both write our cheques now, and hand them to Mr. Moon, who will open a joint account for us in due form. Have you got your cheque-book with you?

HAROLD. I believe I've got a loose one in my pocket-book. (*Produces it.*)

CONWAY. I'll write mine at the same time. (*He produces a cheque-book.*)

HAROLD. You won't put mine through for a day or two, will you? I want to send a carefully worded post-card to my banker first. He has a weak heart.

CONWAY (*laughing*). By all means! I'll tell you what—date your cheque the day after to-morrow. That will give you ample time.

HAROLD (*writing*). What is the full name of Mr. Moon's firm?

CONWAY. Moon, Moon, and Moon.

MR. MOON. Or bearer!

CONWAY. Is that all in order? (*Hands cheque to MR. MOON.*)

MR. MOON. That's quite O.K., Mr. Conway.

HAROLD (*giving cheque to CONWAY*). Is that all right?

CONWAY. Quite all right. I'll hand this to Mr. Moon to keep mine company. (*Does so.*) Your firm will send an official receipt, Mr. Moon?

MR. MOON. Certainly; by all means.

CONWAY. Of course we keep absolutely mum about this.

HAROLD. Oh, of course!

CONWAY. Otherwise we might spoil our own market.

HAROLD. Naturally.

CONWAY (*rises, goes up to window*). Now we'll go along to the bungalow. By the way, Mrs. Moon's two nieces are there.

HAROLD. Nieces?

CONWAY. Yes. Nice bright girls.

HAROLD. I will report at the bungalow forthwith.

CONWAY. And you might bring Denny.

HAROLD. You're sure there are two nieces?

CONWAY. Perfectly.

HAROLD. Then I'll bring him—later—perhaps. This is awfully good of you, Captain Conway.

CONWAY. Only too pleased any other time to oblige you.

(Exit HAROLD R.)

(To MR. MOON.) My cheque, please!

(MR. MOON *hands him his cheque.*)

Thank you. (*He tears it up.*) Now our young friend's.

(MR. MOON *hands him the cheque. He examines it, and puts it in his pocket.*)

Yes, it's all in order. It's rather like pinching the milk from a blind baby's bottle, but I need the sinews of war.

MR. MOON. War?

CONWAY. Yes, I have a little campaign in prospect.

MR. MOON (*plucking up courage*). And what do I get out of it?

CONWAY. If you are good, you will receive a crisp ten-pound note. If not, a visitor from Scotland Yard. So no nonsense, Mr. Moon!

MR. MOON (*cringing*). No, Mr. Conway! I beg your pardon, sir. But we're pretty hard up, and Lizzie—she's none too well. The pain she sometimes suffers of a night—

CONWAY (*coming down and suddenly putting his hands on his shoulders*). You poor, miserable old devil! This world's been pretty hard on you, hasn't it?

MR. MOON. Yes, sir.

CONWAY (*taking a bundle of cheques from his pocket and thrusting some into MR. MOON'S hand*). Here, shove these in your pocket! (*He turns away.*)

MR. MOON (*gratefully*). Open cheques! Endorsed and everything! Oh, guv'nor! God bless you! God bless you! (*Crosses L.*)

DENIS (*voice heard off—upstairs*). Righto, Mum! In half an hour.

CONWAY. Shut up. Here's Denny! Play up to me again! This is the next step.

(DENIS *appears coming downstairs.*)

Hallo, Denis.

DENIS. Hallo, Conway!

CONWAY. You know Mr. Moon, don't you?

DENIS (*nodding to MR. MOON*). Yes. We met at Laura's joy meeting this afternoon.

CONWAY. Your friend Harold has just gone along to my bungalow. Moon, you ought to extend your invitation to Denis.

DENIS. That sounds mysterious. What invitation?

CONWAY (*at head of table*). There's no mystery about it. It's this. I may have to go up to town to-morrow, and possibly run over to Paris a little later. As it happens, Mr. and Mrs. Moon are



going to be there next week, with a couple of their nieces—two nice, bright girls.

DENIS (*interested at once*). Are they here to-day?

CONWAY. They are. Mrs. Moon has just gone to try and collect them for a cigarette and a cocktail in my bungalow. Will you come across and meet them?

DENIS. Will I not?

CONWAY. I presume you don't mind meeting girls who smoke cigarettes and drink cocktails?

DENIS. I didn't know there were any others.

CONWAY (*boisterously*). That's the stuff! Come along over now.

DENIS (*suddenly remembering*). Wait a moment: I'd forgotten. I'm sorry; I promised to take mother out in a canoe for half an hour before dinner. She has a headache.

CONWAY. Just as you like, my boy! I must say you are a dutiful son—aren't you?

DENIS (*stiffly*). One tries to be, and all that.

CONWAY. Of course, so long as a fellow lives at home, he has to play the game and dance attendance at the end of an apron-string.

(DENIS *flinches visibly*.)

But it's grossly unfair. A man—a man of the world like you—is bound to feel his oats a bit at times. He suddenly wants to kick up his heels and squeal—doesn't he? You see, old chap, I understand!

DENIS. My God, you do!

CONWAY. Well, why not take a fortnight off?

DENIS. How?

CONWAY. Come with us!

DENIS (*eagerly*). To Paris?

CONWAY. Yes. London, Paris—anywhere you like. We might go on to Deauville, or somewhere!

DENIS. My word! But—

CONWAY (*playfully*). Mother would object—eh?

DENIS (*with great dignity*). Oh no, not that. Of course I do as I like in these matters. But I'm afraid I'm too broke at present.

CONWAY. My dear old fellow, that's absolutely all right. You are my guest.

DENIS. No, really, I couldn't!

CONWAY. I have had a bit of luck lately—pulled off a good coup on the turf. I have a fat cheque burning a hole in my pocket at this moment, haven't I, Moon?

MR. MOON. You have.

CONWAY. It will be a gorgeous party—you, I, Moon, the two girls, and Mrs. Moon for chaperone! (*Coming closer*.) Give this dead old backwater a miss for a couple of weeks, and come somewhere where you can splash about for a bit! Come where there is life, old chap! Life!

DENIS (*ecstatically*). I must! I must!

CONWAY. Stout lad! Now come along over to the bungalow, and meet the girls for a start. Fall in, Moon! (*He takes DENIS's arm and leads him to the window.*) Can you start to-morrow?

DENIS (*a trifle awkwardly*). Will you break the news to mother for me?

CONWAY. I'll see her within half an hour. But come and meet the girls first.

(*They go out by the window, followed by MR. MOON, laughing and talking.*)

(*Enter cautiously, SIR ANTHONY, with evening paper. He goes to the window and looks out after the retreating figures. He grunts disapprovingly; then he comes down, takes a decanter of sherry from sideboard.*)

SIR ANTHONY. Ah! Sherry! (*He pours out a glass.*)

(*JOAN appears R.*)

JOAN. Hallo, Uncle Tony! What have you been doing?

SIR ANTHONY. Waiting for the coast to clear.

JOAN. So have I.

(*They come down C. and meet. They regard one another with interest.*)

Uncle Tony?

SIR ANTHONY. Yes?

JOAN. I believe you and I belong to the same lodge.

SIR ANTHONY. Meaning?

JOAN. The Anti-Conway Lodge.

SIR ANTHONY (*offering his hand*). Shake!

(*He shakes hands solemnly and goes and sits on the sofa by the fireplace.*)

He's an interesting rascal—a curious case. Entirely devoid of moral principle, and utterly without compassion or conscience of any kind; yet a genial, breezy, attractive fellow, with many gifts. Look at the way he handled that meeting this afternoon. It may be an unpatriotic thing to say, but I do admire tact.

JOAN (*crosses to sofa and sits*). What I chiefly admire is his nerve. Uncle Tony, where did he get his honorary auditor from?

SIR ANTHONY. My dear, he told us. From the firm of Moon, Moon and Moon. Telegraphic address, Moonshine, London.

JOAN. Is there such a firm?

SIR ANTHONY. You may be quite sure there is. He wouldn't do anything so palpably foolish as quote a firm who couldn't be found in the Post Office Directory. Whether our friend in the unusual apparel was a member of that firm is another question.

JOAN. Still, Conway made the meeting swallow the Moons!

SIR ANTHONY. He did—both of them! I take off my hat to Conway—and I drink to his confusion. (*He finishes his glass of sherry, rises, and puts it on the mantelpiece.*) By the way, has he brought his talents to bear on you at all?

JOAN. Oh, yes. He began almost as soon as he arrived, three weeks ago.

SIR ANTHONY. What line did he take?

JOAN. He began by working the old-friend-of-my-father act.

SIR ANTHONY. And I suppose you retaliated with a few words on ancestor worship?

JOAN. I believe I did. I think I discouraged him. Anyhow, he's kept off that topic ever since.

SIR ANTHONY. But you didn't choke him off altogether?

JOAN. Oh dear no. One evening last week he took me out in a punt on the river. He tied the punt to a willow stump and told me the sad story of his life. He told me that his life was a desert and I was an oasis—the first he had encountered for some years.

SIR ANTHONY. What did you say to that?

JOAN. I said I did not think I was green enough to be an oasis. There the conversation terminated.

SIR ANTHONY. Hum! I'm afraid you absolutely punctured his peroration! You're an unsentimental young woman; but you have got your head screwed on all right. Did he try to borrow money from you? (*Crosses to and sits on sofa.*)

JOAN. No. Perhaps that bit came in the peroration. Has he tried to get round *you* at all?

SIR ANTHONY. So far he has attempted nothing—except to prepare the ground by referring to me as a retired proconsul of our Eastern Empire. How does he get on with the rest of the household?

JOAN. I'm afraid he has designs on Denny and Harold. He has been talking to them a good deal of late. Of course Harold is quite safe.

SIR ANTHONY. Harold? You surprise me!

JOAN. I mean, if he gets into a mess he'll come and tell me about it, and I'll get him out of it. (*SIR ANTHONY chuckles.*) What are you chuckling at?

SIR ANTHONY. Just thoughts. Do you love this boy, Joan?

JOAN. I suppose so.

SIR ANTHONY. Do you know I find you a very agreeable person?

JOAN. In what way?

SIR ANTHONY. In the sense that your attitude to this fortunate youth agrees with a pet theory of mine.

JOAN. What?

SIR ANTHONY. That a woman only loves a man for one of two reasons—either because he gives her a thrill, or because she considers that he requires taking care of.

JOAN (*on the defensive at once*). Well, doesn't Harold require taking care of?

SIR ANTHONY. He certainly does! So does Master Denny, for that matter.

JOAN. Denny requires looking after more than taking care of. He bothers me a lot. He's self-conscious; that makes him secretive.

SIR ANTHONY. Joan, you know something about your fellow-creatures!

JOAN. Do I? I wonder where I get it from? Not mother: she is a child at judging character. Papa, perhaps. (*She takes a cigarette from table by sofa, then rises and crosses to fireplace, gets matches.*) I'm thankful for one thing, and that is that Molly isn't here. She would simply have wallowed in dear Captain Conway—almost as badly as mother.

SIR ANTHONY. Ah! Is mother wallowing?

JOAN. I don't know—I don't know. (*Going up to back of settee, round small table and turning to him impulsively.*) Uncle Tony, there's something going on. I can feel it when I am in a room with them. He has some influence over mother. It may be love; it may be fear; but she does whatever he tells her. She doesn't seem to want to see him, yet she does see him. He is in and out of this house all day. And what's more, she goes and visits him.

SIR ANTHONY. God bless me! In his bungalow?

JOAN. Yes.

SIR ANTHONY. That is very imprudent.

JOAN. Imprudent? It's insane! Laura Meakin saw her three days ago, coming out.

SIR ANTHONY. And Laura has been making comments?

JOAN. Ever since! All over the parish! "She says it very loud and clear! She says it in the Vicar's ear!"

SIR ANTHONY. What's the motive—love or fear?

JOAN. I hate to say it, but something tells me it's love.

SIR ANTHONY. Personally, I can't believe it. This man must have some hold over your mother.

JOAN. But Uncle Tony, can you imagine mother ever having done anything shady? It would be too funny, if it weren't so tragic (*turns to c.*).

SIR ANTHONY (*rising*). That's the word, Joan—tragic! There's a black spirit of tragedy hovering over this sunny little backwater of ours. I can almost hear its ghostly wings rustling. (*Crosses to JOAN c.*) In these surroundings the whole thing seems ludicrous. We row, we picnic, we frivol, we haven't a care in the world! But the spirit is there, waiting to pounce! Joan, we must exorcise that spirit. I think I'll talk to your mother. She may need help.

(MILDRED appears on the stairs R.)

JOAN. Here she is now.

SIR ANTHONY. Leave us, my dear!



JOAN. Hallo, mother! Looking for Denny? (*Crosses R. in front of table.*)

MILDRED. Presently, dear. There's no hurry.

JOAN. I'll find him for you, anyhow.

(*Exit R. into dining-room.*)

(MILDRED turns to SIR ANTHONY).

MILDRED. Well, Uncle Tony, have the festivities of the afternoon exhausted you? (*Crosses to fireplace L.*)

SIR ANTHONY (*crosses to R.C. end of table, leans against it*). Which of them—the Regatta or the Meeting?

MILDRED (*smiling*). Whichever you please!

SIR ANTHONY. The Regatta exhausted me considerably—especially the gentleman with the black face and prismatic trousers who cast anchor alongside our punt and asked me “whose Baby I was?” But the meeting was a tonic. Our chairman is quite a character.

(MILDRED puts sherry glass used by SIR ANTHONY on sideboard.)

MILDRED. I suppose you have never met anybody quite like him before.

SIR ANTHONY. Oh, yes, I have. There is a penal settlement in the Indian Ocean, to which I have frequently contributed recruits, full of people just like him—or as like him as they are able to be. (c.)

MILDRED (*startled*). What do you mean? (*Sits sofa L.*)

SIR ANTHONY (*crosses and takes chair from L. of table and sits at head of sofa*). I mean, my dear, that the man is an arrant scamp, and I shall make it my business to expose him.

MILDRED (*much agitated*). Uncle Tony, you mustn't.

SIR ANTHONY. Why not?

MILDRED. He's—he's—my friend!

SIR ANTHONY. We do not always select our friends for their virtues. Sometimes we have to have them. Is this man straight—or crooked?

MILDRED. He's eccentric. He does foolish things at times. But be patient! I will see that he doesn't do anything wrong. Only—only—please don't try to find out anything about him! If he were pressed too hard, he might—he might——

SIR ANTHONY. You don't want him driven into a corner?

MILDRED. No.

SIR ANTHONY. For fear he might turn nasty?

MILDRED. Yes.

SIR ANTHONY. Give some one away?

MILDRED. Yes.

SIR ANTHONY. Not you—but somebody?

MILDRED. What do you mean?

SIR ANTHONY. My dear, brave, loyal Milly——

MILDRED. Loyal! What do you mean? (*Fearfully.*) Have you guessed?

SIR ANTHONY. I think so.

MILDRED (*finally—in a whisper*). What have you guessed?

SIR ANTHONY. That in refusing to expose this fellow you are shielding some one else, or rather, some one else's memory. Conway has found out something about your husband, and is blackmailing you.

(MILDRED looks into fire.)

MILDRED. Oh! (*She realizes that SIR ANTHONY is on the wrong scent. She hardly knows whether this is a relief or not.*)

SIR ANTHONY (*rises*). Well, you're helpless, because if you fight, that precious record of which you are so proud—which you have taught your children to revere—may be smirched. Is that so?

MILDRED. Yes, that is so.

SIR ANTHONY. That is why I called you loyal. Now, can't I help you to get rid of this man?

MILDRED. If only you could! But you can't!

SIR ANTHONY (*moves R.C.*). There is one way which I have seldom known to fail in such cases.

MILDRED. What's that?

SIR ANTHONY. To investigate his record—quietly. I warrant I'll find out something about him which will put the boot on the other leg,—put him absolutely at our mercy.

MILDRED (*rises, going to him speaking feverishly*). No, no, no, no! You mustn't do that. Don't try to find out about him! You will ruin everything if you do! (*Turns away from him to L.C.*)

SIR ANTHONY. I shouldn't publish my knowledge. I should just explain to him that I know who he is——

MILDRED. Uncle Tony, don't! You can't bring him down without bringing me down—without bringing the children down! Don't!

SIR ANTHONY. It's as bad as that, is it?

MILDRED. Yes. (*Moves to fireplace.*)

SIR ANTHONY. Very well, my dear, I won't. But what's to be done?

MILDRED. You must have patience, dear Uncle Tony! I have hopes of getting him to go away. There is quite a chance. I think I can succeed—really I do! But however you may feel, don't try to precipitate things! (*Comes to SIR ANTHONY.*)

SIR ANTHONY. Certainly! Now, don't distress yourself! And remember, whenever you require a friend, that the battered old ruin who now confronts you is always at your service.

MILDRED. Thank you! (*She kisses him.*)

(*There is the sound of an altercation outside the window.*)

CONWAY (*off stage*). Leave that dog alone, you ruffian! Stop kicking it about, or I'll kick you about. Drop it now, or I'll throw you in the river there!

VOICE (*off*). You mind your own business, interfering with an honest hard-working man, that has to earn his living! It's my dog, and I paid for it. I suppose a man can do what he likes with his own property—eh?

(MILDRED runs up to the window and looks out.)

SIR ANTHONY. What's that? (*At chair L.*)

MILDRED. It's Captain Conway on the towpath.

SIR ANTHONY (*goes up to window behind MILDRED*). He appears to be reciting.

MILDRED. He's talking to a rough-looking man—a man wheeling a Punch and Judy show.

SIR ANTHONY. Another Honorary Auditor, doubtless. Surely he's not going to bring *him* in?

MILDRED. No, he's left him now. He's coming in here. (*Gets behind SIR ANTHONY. She shrinks away from the window and goes back to the fireplace.*)

(CONWAY appears at the window. For the moment he is quite transformed with generous indignation.)

CONWAY (*shouting in the direction of the towpath*). And if I catch you at it again, you infernal ruffian, I'll chuck you in the river—and hold you under!

(He turns and sees MILDRED and SIR ANTHONY and checks himself immediately.)

I beg your pardon! I'm afraid I alarmed you! The fact is, (*with renewed indignation*) that ruffian was kicking his dog about—the poor little brute that supports him! So I kicked him about! Idiotic, of course, but if there's one thing in this world that revolts me, it's cruelty of that kind. (*Goes down R.C.*)

SIR ANTHONY (L.C.). You are referring, I presume, to physical cruelty?

CONWAY. Is there any other kind that matters?

SIR ANTHONY (*deliberately*). Incredible as it may appear, Captain Conway, there is. And you know it!

(MILDRED looks at CONWAY.)

CONWAY (*startled*). I'm afraid I don't quite follow you.

SIR ANTHONY. Mrs. Cradock has just been honouring me with her confidence—

CONWAY (*with a swift glance at his wife*). Oh, has she?

MILDRED. No, Uncle Tony, I haven't really! (*Moves towards SIR ANTHONY'S R.*)

SIR ANTHONY. To this extent that you have some hold over

her, and are trading upon it. I have not pressed Mrs. Cradock for details, so I know nothing more than that.

CONWAY. Ah!

SIR ANTHONY. But I should like to give you a piece of professional information; and that is, that the law has an ugly name for people like you, and an uncomfortable remedy for activities such as yours.

CONWAY (*quite at his ease now*). But you must first catch your hare, my dear Sir Anthony! To employ an expression which I picked up in the United States—you have nothing on me!

SIR ANTHONY. Captain Conway, I will admit for the moment that I have nothing on you——

CONWAY (*turns away, lightly*). So that's that. (*Sits R. of table.*)

SIR ANTHONY. But I may add that, though I have never visited the United States, I recently met an American *attaché* here in London, from whose vocabulary I culled many priceless flowers of American idiom.

CONWAY. Such as——?

SIR ANTHONY (*coming close to him, and looking him straight in the face, at head of table*). "One of these days I shall catch you with the goods!" (*Suddenly.*) Captain Conway, let me appeal to you; you are a man of very exceptional talents and ability. Why don't you run straight? Why don't you play the game?

CONWAY. Too boring, my old friend! Too easy! Life is so much more interesting if you avoid the beaten path of virtue. That's my answer! Now, I want a little chat with Mrs. Cradock. Will you excuse me?

SIR ANTHONY. Certainly—not! (*He sits on chair head of table.*)

(CONWAY makes a signal to MRS. CRADOCK.)

MILDRED (*timidly*). Please, Uncle Tony!

SIR ANTHONY (*rising*). Very well, my dear. But, in leaving this gentleman on your premises, may I recommend you—again quoting my friend the *attaché*—to have all your furniture screwed to the floor? (*He takes up the evening paper and exit through window.*)

CONWAY (*rises, goes up to window—looking after SIR ANTHONY*). H'm! Do you know, I believe that old man was trying to be rude to me. I wonder why. Perhaps he hasn't quite forgiven me for being elected chairman this afternoon. (*He turns and finds MILDRED facing him.*)

MILDRED (*in a low, tense voice*). What do you want now?

CONWAY. You appear agitated——

MILDRED. Yes, I want you to understand this—I am not going to have my friends robbed! You must pay back those cheques and postal orders that you stole this afternoon.

CONWAY. My dear child, fair exchange is no robbery. If there was any unfairness, it was to myself. I collected eighty-seven



pounds odd, and am giving a perfectly good cheque for a hundred pounds in return—or rather you are, which makes the transaction even more impeccable. (*Crosses below table to R.*)

MILDRED. Sit down. I must speak to you.

CONWAY. Certainly. (*Sits R. of table.*)

MILDRED (*standing opposite to him*). This sort of thing can't go on any longer.

CONWAY. Why not?

MILDRED. It's too shameful! You have made me stand sponsor for you. You have robbed my friends——

CONWAY. Only of very trifling sums, as yet.

MILDRED. That makes it more shameful. They were such mean little thefts.

CONWAY. But you must remember that most of the people about here are in very moderate circumstances. If they had more money, I would take it.

MILDRED. You have pilfered, you have cheated, you have sponged on every one. You have borrowed money which you never mean to repay. You have even made love to foolish women like Laura Meakin——

CONWAY. In justice to myself, I must tell you that there are others who do more credit to my taste than dear Laura. There is a perfect little peach at the Dairy Farm beyond Swaveley——

MILDRED. I think I can take your list of conquests as read. I have known you a good many years now, you know. You are living the life of a parasite; partly on me, which I can stand; partly on my friends, which I can not stand. But all that's a trifle compared with the rest! (*Goes up to window, looks off R.*)

CONWAY. The rest?

MILDRED. Yes—(*at window*)—the human part. Money is nothing. But you have been trying to take my children from me! (*Comes down to L. of table.*)

CONWAY. Dear, dear! Have I?

MILDRED. Yes—ever since you arrived. You have made little headway with Joan——

CONWAY. That is true. I have got no change out of Joan. They are strange, hard creatures, modern daughters!

MILDRED. —But you are demoralizing Denny. You are making him restless—discontented. I believe you are leading him into bad ways. He's not so frank with me as he used to be. He talked a lot of quite new nonsense to me the other day—about apron-strings, and the necessity of a man living his own life, and sowing his wild oats; and all the pernicious rignmarole with which creatures like you try to stimulate inexperienced boys. That's what you've been doing.

CONWAY. My dear Milly, the best of all weapons is a hostage.

MILDRED (*steadily*). You're demoralizing Denny, and I am going to stop it.

CONWAY. How do you propose to set about it, my dear ?

MILDRED. How much money will you take to go right away ?

CONWAY. Right away—where to ?

MILDRED. New York, Cape Town—anywhere ! I would pay you an allowance—a big allowance. You would apply for it personally every month. (*Coming closer to head of table—eagerly.*) Denis, I would give you a lot. I could live on very little ; and once I had the children settled in life, I would send it all—every penny of it. Denis—*please !* (*Leans over him.*)

CONWAY. You look very attractive when you plead, Milly. But I have an alternative to propose.

MILDRED (*catching at a straw*). Yes, yes !

CONWAY. Sit here, and listen. (*Rises and gives her his chair—she sits—he stands behind her chair R.*) Of course it's a modest proposal, because to a certain extent you have me in your power, and I can't afford to push you too hard. If I do, you will burn your boats, and tell the whole story. Having done that, I suppose you would employ the Law to fling me out altogether ?

MILDRED. Yes. I lie awake every night just now, wondering whether it wouldn't be the wisest course to do it once and for all.

CONWAY. Precisely ! But that last suggestion of yours ? Do you think it was quite kind, quite Christian ?

MILDRED. Christian ?

CONWAY (*crosses C.*). What is it that you are asking me to do—to go away from here—and retire to some remote foreign seaport and live the life of—what ? A remittance man !

MILDRED. Aren't you a remittance man now ?

CONWAY. No. A remittance man is paid to stay abroad and drink himself to death. You pay me to stay here and keep sober.

MILDRED. For heaven's sake, don't be flippant ! What is your alternative ?

CONWAY. This. As I say, the situation here has developed. I have made quite a hit in this neighbourhood, as an eligible *parti*. Flappers languish after me : Laura Meakin has as good as laid her heart and gilt-edged securities at my feet. Several more of your friends are consumed by a hopeless passion for me. And do you know why they regard that passion as hopeless ? Because they have made up their minds, collectively, that you are the lucky one ! (*Comes to L. of table.*)

MILDRED. Oh !

CONWAY. Milly, you and I find ourselves once more, in our middle age, the central figures of a romance—a romance manufactured for us by these worthy, sentimental, chuckle-headed neighbours of yours ! My suggestion is that we do not disappoint them.

MILDRED. What do you mean ?

CONWAY. I mean—let Mildred Cradock take Dale Conway for

her second husband, and put the parish out of its misery! Mrs. Craddock, will you marry me?

MILDRED. Never! Never!

CONWAY. Imagine the advantages of such an arrangement——

MILDRED. They certainly call for some imagination!

CONWAY. You would profit——

MILDRED. I? Good Heavens!

CONWAY. Yes: it would be a great economy for you. It must be very expensive, having to board me out and run me as a separate show.

MILDRED. It is cheap at the price.

CONWAY. The children would profit. You object to acknowledge me as their father, because you say it would demoralize them to know that my undesirable blood runs in their veins. But if I become their stepfather, that objection is overruled, isn't it?

MILDRED. Nothing could overrule it.

CONWAY. And lastly, there is my own humble little point of view. I should profit too; I admit that frankly. I should be established once more in the position—my rightful position, Mildred!—of husband and father.

MILDRED. Father?

CONWAY. Yes—father! My children would not know that I was theirs, but I at least would know that they were mine.

MILDRED. It's a little late in the day for that sort of talk. Is that all? I think you had better go now. (*Rises*).

CONWAY. No—it isn't all. (*Coming closer—in a low voice.*) Milly, when you married me, you loved me, didn't you?

MILDRED (*turning away*). Need we go into that?

CONWAY. And you love me, still, Milly?

MILDRED (*turning round to him*). Twenty years ago I thought there was no man in the world like you. Now, I merely hope there isn't.

CONWAY. That's not a very direct denial, Milly. Anyhow, you loved me once, and I loved you. (*For the moment he appears to be speaking with absolute sincerity.*) And I do still! (*Pause.*) That's all. I just wanted you to know.

MILDRED. Don't lie to me, Denis!

CONWAY. It's not a lie. It's the truth—the truth!

MILDRED (*calmly*). No, my friend, it's not. You think it is, for the moment. I'll give you credit for that. You have a genuine talent for inventing telling arguments, as many a woman has discovered to her cost, and you do it so well that you sometimes come to believe them yourself. You thought you were being quite sincere just now.

CONWAY. I was—I am!

MILDRED (*shaking her head*). No! I have known you for twenty-two years, you see; and it won't do. If I thought that there was any truth in what you said just now, one single live spark

of truth or sincerity—I might find it in my heart to forgive everything, and give you another chance. But I don't think there is. You are only acting. You don't think you are acting, but you are. What you said just now was simply an inspiration of the moment. You will realize that in five minutes. (*She goes slowly towards stairs, R.*)

CONWAY (*doggedly*). It was the truth, Milly!

MILDRED. Believe me, I know better.

CONWAY (*passionately, at head of table c.*). It is the truth! I came here to-day purposely to tell it to you.

MILDRED (*pausing in spite of herself*). To tell me what?

CONWAY. This. You say I am a bad egg. Perhaps I am. You say I live by my wits on my friends. Perhaps I do. You say I have treated you badly. I certainly have. You say I would demoralize my own children. Perhaps I should. You say I am every kind of heartless, cold-blooded, deliberate schemer. Well, I am a lot of things, but I'm not that. I'm human, and I love you. And I believe you love me! (*Going to the foot of the staircase R.*) Milly, give me another chance! I swear I'll be a good husband to you. If ever I fail you again I promise faithfully to walk straight out of this house and out of your life for good and all. Look at me.

(*She looks at him, half fascinated.*)

Look at me as you used to look at me years ago. Yes, I can see the old look coming back. Oh, Milly, am I acting now?

MILDRED (*turning and coming down a step or two. Hesitatingly*). Oh, Denis, I can't be certain. You are so impulsive.

CONWAY (*softly*). Milly!

(*They gaze at one another tensely for a moment. MILDRED'S face begins to soften. Suddenly there is a sound outside, and DENIS'S voice is heard off stage.*)

DENIS (*off stage*). Conway, are you there?

CONWAY. What is it, Denny?

(*Bus. CONWAY goes to window. DENIS appears boisterously, hands in pockets.*)

DENIS. I like your cocktails, old man, and that little fair girl is a pippin. I'm glad we are all going to Paris. The gang's all here. Shall I bring them in?

CONWAY. No, no, no! I'll come along presently.

DENIS. Right-ho. Bags, old son! (*Exit to L.*)

(*At the sound of DENIS'S voice, the spell has been broken. MILDRED comes down R.C. Her melting mood is entirely gone.*)

MILDRED (R.C.). So you were lying again!

CONWAY (*crosses L.C. - half amused and half ashamed*). Well, my dear, I suppose I was. But honestly, I didn't know I was. I was quite sincere for the moment. I'd clean forgotten Denny and



everything else, because you carried me off my feet. I was up in the clouds, and so were you. Confess it now!

MILDRED (R.C.—*quite calm now*). I will be equally sincere, my friend. For the moment *I was up in the clouds*, but I have come down to earth—for good. (*Passionately*.) What are you plotting to do to my son?

CONWAY (*reverting entirely to his flippant, easy-going manner*). Well, that was what is known in military strategy as an alternative scheme. I had decided, if my last appeal to you failed, most regretfully to apply the screw. The time has now come to apply it.

MILDRED (*in sudden fear*). What do you mean?

CONWAY. I'm going to get to work on one of my hostages.

MILDRED. Denny?

CONWAY. Yes.

MILDRED. What evil are you going to do to him?

CONWAY. I promised just now that if you caught me tripping again I would pack up and clear out. Well, I'm going to keep my promise. I'm going to clear out, and I'm going to take Denny with me. And I may add that when, if ever, he comes back, it will be on my terms and not yours.

(DENIS appears in the window.)

DENIS. They've gone. Now what about First Line (*at window*) Transport? (*Seeing MILDRED and laughing awkwardly*.) Oh, hallo, Mother!

CONWAY. Come along in, Denny, and help me to wangle our fortnight's leave.

MILDRED (*advancing to DENIS—DENIS comes down—and trying to speak calmly*). Denny, where are you going to-morrow?

(CONWAY turns away, sits on back of sofa, lights a cigarette.)

DENIS (*laboriously, and looking appealingly in CONWAY's direction*). Well, the fact is, Mother, I've been in training for this Regatta for nearly three weeks, as you know——

CONWAY (*coming to his help*). And he stroked his crew to victory this afternoon——

DENIS. And now that it's all over, I was just wondering if it wouldn't be a good thing for one to take a bit of a—a—holiday; and as Captain Conway happens to be going up to town for a few days, and has very kindly offered to take me with him, it seemed to me it would be a sound plan for—er—one to accept.

(MILDRED looks first at CONWAY, and then at DENIS, but says nothing.)

After that, we thought of joining a little party of Captain Conway's friends for a tour on the Continent. Those old historical places, you know—Paris, and so forth. (*To CONWAY*.) Aren't we, old man?

CONWAY. If Mrs. Cradock has no objection. The idea is this: My old friend, Moon——

MILDRED. That man who came to the meeting?

DENIS. Mrs. Moon is an old dear. She will chaperon us.

MILDRED. Chaperon? (*Crossing to CONWAY L.*) There will be other ladies, then?

CONWAY. Yes—two of Mrs. Moon's nieces, I believe. Nice bright girls.

MILDRED. I don't want to lay down the law to you, Denny——

DENIS. Oh, I say, Mother! A fellow can't be tied to your apron-strings all his life!

CONWAY. I should be personally responsible for Denis, Mrs. Cradock.

MILDRED. I have no doubt of that. But I want you to stay here, Denny. I know it must be horribly disappointing for you——

DENIS (*flinging away passionately*). Oh, I'm fed up! (*Crosses R.*)

(*Enter SIR ANTHONY by the window.*)

MILDRED (*follows DENIS down R.*). Denis, you are not going away with that man! (*She throws her arms round his neck and lays her head on his shoulder with a sob.*)

DENIS (*divided between anger and embarrassment*). I say, Mother! Really! Don't make me look ridiculous! Don't be hysterical, please!

MILDRED (*removing her arms and speaking quite steadily again*). I am not hysterical, Denis; but I am in a terribly difficult position, and I can ask no one to advise me.

DENIS (*grandly*). You have a grown-up son.

MILDRED (*half-laughing*). You dear boy! But I can't ask you about this.

SIR ANTHONY (*at head of table*). May I put my oar in? Denny, I am not in your mother's confidence, but I am inclined to think she may have some substantial reason for her objection which she is not at liberty to disclose. (*Coming down R. of table to left of DENIS as MILDRED turns to R.C.*) Don't you think we might take her word for it, and endeavour to meet her wishes?

DENIS (*pompously*). To do so without some sort of explanation or apology would be a direct slight to my friend Captain Conway.

SIR ANTHONY. Perhaps your friend stands less in need of an explanation—or apology—than we imagine.

DENIS. What do you mean? (*Crosses C. to CONWAY.*) What does he mean, Conway?

CONWAY (*behind table L.C.*). I have no idea, Denny. Apparently my character is in question: I am not regarded as a suitable companion for innocent youth. You, Denis, are the innocent youth!

(DENIS is obviously stung by this.)

Very well; I never crowd in where I am not wanted! You stay here, old man, and enjoy your innocence. Good-bye! I'm sorry mother won't let you come! (*He takes up his hat and goes towards the window.*)

(DENIS follows CONWAY up and stops him.)

DENIS. Damn it all, Conway, you shan't be insulted like this! Do you think I'm going to stay here? I'm coming with you. And if I can't be treated decently at home, I won't come back!

MILDRED (*rushing after him and catching his arm*). Denny!

DENIS. It's no good, Mother! (*Moves away.*)

MILDRED. Denny!—wait! Listen! I have something to say to you. I must say it! I had hoped and prayed that I might not have to say it, but I see I must! (*Pointing at CONWAY.*) I am going to tell you all about that man, and who he is. (*Desperately.*) Yes, my mind's made up! I'm going to burn my boats, as you said, and trust in God to help me afterwards. Denny dear, I told you children that this man was an old family friend—a brother officer of your father's.

DENIS (*startled*). Yes, Mother?

CONWAY. So I am!

MILDRED. He's nothing of the kind. I will tell you what he is and who he is. (*Pointing her finger at CONWAY.*) He's——!

(*There is a sudden commotion in the veranda. MOLLY in travelling dress appears running and comes dancing into the room.*)

SIR ANTHONY. Hullo, Molly!

DENIS. You back!

SIR ANTHONY. Where have you sprung from?

(DENIS goes up to meet MOLLY as soon as she appears.)

MOLLY (*radiant with excitement*). Hallo, everybody! Hallo, Mother darling! (*Kisses her mother.*) I'm home! I'm home! Hallo, Denny, dear! (*She turns and kisses her brother.*) We've got the mumps! We've got the mumps! We've got the mumps! We've broken up in a hurry! (*She is just going to embrace CONWAY when she realizes that he is a stranger.*) Oh, I beg your pardon! (*She dances R. to SIR ANTHONY in front of table R.C.*) Uncle Tony, we've got the mumps, and we're infectious! Give me a kiss. (*She embraces SIR ANTHONY, then dances back to her mother and throws herself into her arms.*) Oh, Mother darling!

MILDRED (*clinging to her*). My dear! My dear! Bless you! (*Bus. takes off MOLLY's hat.*)

(*The figure of a young girl of about MOLLY's age is seen peeping in at the window. DENIS sees her and goes up. She at once retreats.*)

DENIS (to MOLLY). I say!

MOLLY. Yes, Denny?

DENIS. Who is that perfectly lovely girl outside on the veranda?

MOLLY (*breaking off an exchange of caresses with her mother*). Oh, I forgot, that's Phyllis!

DENIS. Phyllis Who?

MOLLY. Phyllis Harding. She had nowhere to go, so I brought her here. She's infectious too! I'll bring her in! (*Goes off window to L., followed by DENIS.*)

SIR ANTHONY. I think I'll go and see this infectious young lady. (*Goes up behind MILDRED and exits L. through window.*)

CONWAY. Is that our other child?

MILDRED (*coming down c.*). Denis, I have fought you, step by step and inch by inch, for the last three weeks, and the battle has gone against me. I admit that I give you best.

CONWAY. Thank you.

MILDRED. Now I am going to appeal to you. You said just now that you were human. If you have a spark of humanity left about you, stop—stop and think before you try to bring Molly into your net. She's my last hostage. I appeal to you to leave her alone.

CONWAY. I will consider the matter, my dear. (*Sits on sofa.*)

MILDRED (*fiercely*). You'd better! I said to you three weeks ago that in the last extremity I wouldn't hesitate to kill you. Well, I'm at my last extremity now; and if you dare to tamper for one moment with her belief in the goodness of human nature, if you lay one grimy finger on the little white temple she calls her soul—then, as there's a God above us, I will kill you with my own hands!

(*MOLLY's voice heard off stage. MILDRED goes up to window to meet her.*)

(*Enter MOLLY and DENIS with PHYLLIS and SIR ANTHONY. SIR ANTHONY keeps L. right up to the Finale.*)

MOLLY. Mother, this is Phyllis Harding.

MILDRED (*smiling affectionately*). How do you do, dear? I am so glad Molly had the sense to bring you. (*She kisses her.*)

PHYLLIS. Thank you so much. My people are in India—

MILDRED. Here is some one who will tell you all about India. Sir Anthony Fenwick.

SIR ANTHONY. How do you do? (*Down L.*)

PHYLLIS (*crosses to SIR ANTHONY*). How do you do?

MILDRED. And this is Captain Conway—Miss Harding.

CONWAY (*rising*). How do you do?



PHYLLIS (*turning from SIR ANTHONY to CONWAY.*) How do you do?

SIR ANTHONY. May I? (*Trying to take her bag on her L. side.*)

DENIS (*cutting in*). May I? (*He gets the bag.*)

SIR ANTHONY (*quietly*). Damn!

DENIS. I say, would you like to come out in the garden? I'll show you the river. (*Slowly going up to window.*) You have just missed the Regatta, I'm afraid.

PHYLLIS. Oh! what a pity! (*Goes up stage.*)

DENIS. However, there'll be fireworks to-night. I'll take you out in a canoe.

PHYLLIS. Oh, thank you. (*Looks up at him.*)

DENIS. Not at all. Come along! (*They go out by the window.*)

SIR ANTHONY. I wish I was twenty-one.

CONWAY (*coming c. to MILDRED, in a formal voice*). Will you please introduce me to this young lady?

MILDRED. This is my youngest daughter—Molly. (*Coming down R. of table with MOLLY.*) Molly, dear, this is Captain Conway, a very old friend of ours.

MOLLY (*crosses in front of table to CONWAY and shaking hands with her usual friendliness*). How do you do? An old friend? (*With sudden eagerness.*) Did you know my father?

CONWAY (*holding her hand*). None better.

MOLLY (*with a rapturous sigh*). Oh! How do you do? (*She shakes hands again.*)

CONWAY. I don't seem to have realized your existence, Molly. (*To MILDRED.*) Why haven't I been told about Molly?

MILDRED (*coming R. of table, nervously*). I—I don't know, I'm sure.

CONWAY. Why isn't there a photograph of Molly with the others?

MOLLY. What became of it, Mother?

MILDRED. I took it upstairs, dear.

CONWAY. You were jealous! Tell me, Molly, aren't you your mother's favourite?

MOLLY (*laughing*). Oh, no! Mother has no favourites.

CONWAY. I know she has. You are the favourite; and she didn't want to share even your name—with an outsider like me!

MOLLY. I'm sure you're not an outsider!

CONWAY (*turning triumphantly to SIR ANTHONY and MILDRED*). There, you see, I have a supporter in this household at last! (*Taking up his hat again.*) May I come to lunch to-morrow? We can then finish off the topic we were discussing just now, and I can cultivate Molly's acquaintance at the same time. Can't I, Molly? (*Goes up to window.*)

MOLLY (*much flattered and attracted*). That will be lovely! I'll show you to the gate. (*She goes up to the window.*) But I ought to warn you that I'm infectious! I may give you something! (*At window.*)

CONWAY. Molly, you can't give me anything I haven't had already!

*(They exit through window.)*

SIR ANTHONY *(going up and looking after them)*. I'm not so sure of that, Mildred; I'm not so sure of that!

CURTAIN.

### ACT III

(SIR ANTHONY and MILDRED, in evening dress, are sitting R. of the trellis. They sit silent, listening to the sounds on the river. A boat carrying a gramophone is heard going by. The sound dies down.)

SIR ANTHONY. So that's the real story?

MILDRED. Yes; you know it all now. Having told you, old friend, I feel that I can go on again for a while. I very nearly gave up this afternoon. If Molly hadn't dropped in on us from the skies I should have shrieked out the whole truth to everybody. I feel stronger, now I have confessed.

SIR ANTHONY. Confide would be a better word. I am proud to have been made the recipient of your confidence.

MILDRED. Bless you! I know telling people doesn't really help, but it makes things easier, somehow.

SIR ANTHONY. A trouble shared is a trouble halved.

(Shouts off.)

Hallo, what's this? (He rises and looks off R. up the river.)

(There are sounds of a collision and an altercation. Gramophone suddenly stops. A woman's shriek.)

1ST VOICE. Where do you think you're going, sir? Take your oar out of my wife's back!

2ND VOICE. If you can't manage a punt you ought to stay on the towpath.

3RD VOICE. Not so much of it! Oh, fry your face!

MILDRED. What's the matter? (Rises and joins him.)

SIR ANTHONY. Nothing serious. Ships that can't pass in the night.

MILDRED. The river is running strongly, after the week's rain.

SIR ANTHONY. So I noticed this afternoon, as I watched Master Harold Bagby contending with his punt pole. Now - let's hold a council of war. What are we going to do about it?

MILDRED. What do you advise, Uncle Tony?

SIR ANTHONY. My advice to you is the advice I have been giving people throughout the forty years of my extremely undiplomatic career.

MILDRED. What is that?

SIR ANTHONY. "When in doubt, tell the truth." Tell your children who this man is.

MILDRED. That would involve telling them what he is.

SIR ANTHONY. It would.

MILDRED (*feverishly*). Uncle Tony, I can't! I simply can't! Think! The shame of it—for them! A father like that, and a liar for a mother—a liar for twenty years! (*She sits again.*) They would never trust me again.

SIR ANTHONY. What is your husband's price? I am quite sure he has one. (*He sits beside her.*)

MILDRED. He wants me to take him as my second husband.

SIR ANTHONY. What? Marry him—again?

MILDRED. Yes. Go through the ceremony, as if it were something quite new to us.

SIR ANTHONY. H'm! It's an ingenious suggestion. I can see his point of view. Your lips permanently sealed, and free board and lodging for life assured to him! Incidentally, he would find himself in the unique position of second husband to a woman who could not possibly cast up to him the virtues of her first. But I don't quite see where you come in.

MILDRED. No. I don't suppose he considered that.

SIR ANTHONY. I am quite certain he didn't. You refused, of course?

MILDRED. Of course. It would be a living lie—and a sin.

SIR ANTHONY. What then? You said this afternoon you thought there was an alternative that he might accept.

MILDRED. Yes. I could go back to him.

SIR ANTHONY. Back to him?

MILDRED. Yes—by myself.

SIR ANTHONY (*amazed*). My dear Milly—

MILDRED (*eagerly*). Not immediately, of course; but in a few years' time. I will promise him that—with every penny I have thrown in—if he will only go away now and not come back till I have had a chance to get the children settled in life. (*With great assumption of cheerfulness.*) After all, they are getting pretty big now. Joan is as good as engaged to Harold, so she's no anxiety. Denny will soon be able to keep himself, since you helped him to the promise of that splendid berth. Molly—(*she nearly breaks down here*)—Molly will soon grow up, and—and marry some nice boy. I shall be quite independent then, and I can give my whole time to my husband. I think he needs me. I think—I think it's what I ought to have decided on all along.

SIR ANTHONY. My God, Mildred, you are a brave woman! (*Rises.*)

MILDRED. No, I'm not. I'm a fearful coward; but I happen to be a mother—that's all.

SIR ANTHONY. Well, I don't happen to be a mother, but I know courage when I meet it.



MILDRED. Oh, Uncle Tony, it's so difficult to be courageous ! Of course, to a man courage comes naturally ; but to a woman——

SIR ANTHONY. Don't you believe it ! The average man is the most pacific creature alive—just about seven times as pacific as the average woman.

MILDRED. My dear, you can't make me believe that. Look at the things our men did in the war.

SIR ANTHONY. Yes ; and I bet most of them were in a blue funk while they were doing them ! In my young days I had to do them myself, and I know. Has it ever occurred to you, Mildred, to consider why men do brave things—or, for that matter, honourable things ?

MILDRED. Because they are brave and honourable men.

SIR ANTHONY (*testily—crosses L. and back to C.*). Stuff and nonsense ! Most of us are arrant cowards and natural rascallions. Such efforts as we make in the direction of courage or virtue are usually prompted by a childish desire to live up to a standard set for us by somebody else. That's what it comes to, Mildred. Believe me, many a man has won the Victoria Cross with his heart in his boots, simply because some fuzzy-headed little nonentity in a jumper at home had taken it for granted from the start that he was going to win it, and he didn't dare go home without it ! It's the same with our morals. We keep straight—we do the right thing—not because we are naturally virtuous, but from a foolish pride in living up to some still more foolish person's estimate of us.

MILDRED (*rising and going to him*). Dear Uncle Tony, I believe you're talking all this nonsense just to get me out of my black mood. It's good of you.

SIR ANTHONY (*much annoyed*). Nonsense ? Pah ! It's golden truth ! I give women up ! Now, to resume. You would renounce everything, go away from here, and go back to that fellow ?

MILDRED. Yes, if it would keep him away from the children.

SIR ANTHONY. Does he want you ?

(*He sits. MILDRED stands looking out over the river.*)

MILDRED. He says so.

SIR ANTHONY (*hesitatingly*). Do you think he—loves you ?

MILDRED (*calmly*). I don't see how he can. I know too much about his character. A man will forgive a woman anything but that. But he seems to want me.

SIR ANTHONY. Do you still—care for him ?

MILDRED. When I married him I gave him everything—and I am not the sort that asks for things back again, Uncle Tony.

(*Voices are heard L.*)

SIR ANTHONY. I understand. What are these ?

DENIS (*off stage L.*). It's rather dark here. I'll show you the way. Give me your hand, Miss Harding.

PHYLLIS. Thank you, Mr. Cradock.

(DENIS appears up L., leading PHYLLIS. He carries a canoe paddle in his other hand. He is in evening dress with a dinner jacket and black tie. PHYLLIS is wearing a simple white evening frock. Throughout the scene she behaves with great demureness.)

DENIS. I think it is jolly to be on the water at night—under the moon, and so forth. Not that there is a moon! (They both laugh, constrainedly.) Sit down, won't you?

PHYLLIS. Thank you. (She sits in a beehive chair, L. of the hedge. DENIS takes the other.)

DENIS. Quite comfortable?

PHYLLIS. Yes, thank you. I think it's wonderful, Mr. Cradock, all you know about boats.

DENIS. Oh, I say, do you really? I should be a pretty fair rotter if I didn't. I have spent most of my life on the river, you know.

PHYLLIS. Were you rowing in the races to-day?

DENIS. Oh, yes, in a small way.

SIR ANTHONY (to MILDRED). I like him for saying that.

DENIS. I think you said you didn't smoke?

PHYLLIS. No, I don't. It's stupid of me, I know.

DENIS. Not at all! I think it shows great character.

PHYLLIS (more demure than ever). Oh, do you?

DENIS. Yes. Half the girls I know only smoke because they are frightened to refuse. It's the same with cocktails, and things like that.

PHYLLIS. I am afraid I don't like them either.

DENIS. I am so glad. I hate to see a woman drinking.

PHYLLIS. You don't think me old-fashioned?

DENIS (solemnly). Old fashions are the best.

SIR ANTHONY (to MILDRED). Is Saul also among the prophets?

DENIS. The fact is, you get to know the modern girl so quickly, that before you know where you are you know her too much, and—and there you are! Why, Miss Harding, some of them get quite ratty if you don't call them by their Christian names right off.

PHYLLIS. Oh, Mr. Cradock!

DENIS. Now, what I like about you is that you don't pretend to be what you're not. The modern girl is so afraid of being thought simple and natural that she has to go about all the time pretending to be most awfully dissipated and blasé, when really she's quite all right, you know.

PHYLLIS. You're terribly critical of us, Mr. Cradock.

DENIS (loftily). I am not criticizing one sex alone. Men are just as idiotic. Miss Harding, there are far more good people walking this earth pretending to be bad, than bad people pretending to be good.

SIR ANTHONY. What a memory?

DENIS. There's nothing makes a wolf—sheep!—feel so safe as dressing up like a sheep—wolf! Scratch a devil——

PHYLLIS. Oh, Mr. Cradock!

DENIS. Well, what I mean is that you are the most understanding girl I've ever met.

PHYLLIS. Oh, am I?

DENIS. Yes.

PHYLLIS. Oh!

(DENIS brings his chair closer.)

SIR ANTHONY (to MILDRED). Are we eavesdropping?

MILDRED. I think we are.

SIR ANTHONY (rising). Perhaps it would be as well—eh?

MILDRED. Perhaps.

SIR ANTHONY (loudly). I am going into the house for another cigar.

MILDRED. All right, Uncle Tony. I will wait here for you.

(SIR ANTHONY crosses L. below the hedge. DENIS and PHYLLIS hurriedly lean back in their chairs.)

SIR ANTHONY. Hallo, Denny!

DENIS. Hallo, Uncle Tony!

SIR ANTHONY. Enjoying the fireworks?

DENIS. Rather!

SIR ANTHONY. You don't get a very good view from here.

DENIS. We have been out once, in the canoe. We're just off again. (Rising briskly.) Now, Miss Harding, what about it? (He picks up the paddle.)

(SIR ANTHONY chuckles, and goes out L. up the steps.)

MILDRED (appearing from behind the hedge). Take care of yourselves, children. Don't get upset.

DENIS. No fear!

PHYLLIS. I feel so safe, Mrs. Cradock, with Mr. Cradock.

DENIS. Excuse me just one moment.

PHYLLIS. Certainly, Mr. Cradock.

DENIS (he goes C. to his mother). Mother, I'm so sorry I was rude to you this afternoon. I lost my temper.

(SIR ANTHONY re-enters down steps L. and watches DENIS.)

MILDRED. That's all right, dear.

(She inclines her head to him and he kisses her; then he hesitates, awkwardly, as if intending to say something. Finally he thinks better of it and goes back to PHYLLIS.)

DENIS. Now, Miss Harding—women and children first! (They race off L.)

(MILDRED turns and sees SIR ANTHONY.)

SIR ANTHONY. I'm glad he did that. (*Comes c.*)

MILDRED. So am I.

SIR ANTHONY. Does it mean that the expedition to Paris is relinquished?

MILDRED. No, I'm afraid not. It was on the tip of his tongue to give it all up just now, but he could not quite bring himself to speak.

SIR ANTHONY. Perhaps Miss Phyllis will help him to decide.

MILDRED. I shouldn't wonder.

SIR ANTHONY. She's infectious, all right!

MILDRED. She's a very nice girl. And what is more, she's dark and stately. He has always liked them fair and fluffy before.

SIR ANTHONY. That is the most cheering piece of intelligence I have heard to-day. My godson inoculated against Fluff! It seems almost too much to hope!

JOAN (*off stage R.*). Come along, Bags; we must find Mother.

HAROLD (*off stage R.*). Personally I don't know why you want Mother.

SIR ANTHONY. Here are the other two creatures. I wonder what their symptoms are?

(*Enter HAROLD and JOAN R.*)

JOAN. Hallo, Mother! We've been hunting for you. Come along to the enclosure.

HAROLD (*to SIR ANTHONY*). The set-pieces are just going to begin.

SIR ANTHONY (*quickly*). Yes. I know how they work!

MILDRED. Very well. Where's my Molly?

JOAN. Your leprous child? She was with us until about half an hour ago, making a public nuisance of herself on the towpath.

MILDRED. Good gracious! What was she doing?

JOAN. Pestering young men in blue blazers for their autographs, and probably giving them mumps in return!

MILDRED. She ought really to be isolated. I must go and find her.

HAROLD. She's all right now, Mrs. Cradock. She's on the water at present, so the risk is limited to one gentleman.

MILDRED. And who is the poor gentleman?

HAROLD. Captain Conway.

(*JOAN makes a warning gesture, but it is too late.*)

MILDRED. Captain Conway?

HAROLD. Yes. I saw them push off together from the Committee landing-stage some time ago.

MILDRED (*faintly*). Oh!

JOAN. They'll be all right, mother.



MILDRED. But I don't think she ought to be out on the river at this time of night with—with anybody! Please run and look for her, Harold, and tell her to come in. Take a boat.

HAROLD. Righto, Mrs. Cradock!

*(Crosses L. and exits up L.)*

MILDRED. You go too, Joan. You will pick her out sooner.

JOAN. All right, Mother.

*(Exit up L.)*

MILDRED. It's happened—what I dreaded most of all! Molly! My other hostage!

SIR ANTHONY. They were bound to get together sooner or later.

MILDRED. She's at his mercy out there; she's at his mercy! We're all at his mercy! Oh, Uncle Tony, he'll take her away with him.

SIR ANTHONY. No, he won't—not from you!

MILDRED. Yes. It's no use going on any longer. I'm trapped. There's no way out! There's no way out! *(She breaks down and sobs hysterically.)*

SIR ANTHONY *(puts his hand on her shoulder)*. My dear child, you are all wrought up to-night; and you have been so splendid so far. Take heart, and listen to me. I have been young, and now I am old; I have had my share of the perplexities and sorrows of this world; and they have taught me just two lessons: first, that where human nature is concerned you can never foretell anything. A clever man is never infallibly clever; a bad man is never utterly vile. There is a white spot on the blackest of us. That is one lesson. The other is that there is always a way out of every difficulty.

MILDRED *(despondently)*. Not this one!

SIR ANTHONY. Yes—*always*! You and I may not be able to find it, but it is there. If that had not been so, the human family would not have survived for so many centuries. So long as God's writ runs on earth there will always be a way out, even though sometimes a miracle be required to reveal it. We are only gropers—sometimes merely because our eyes are shut; but the light is there all the time. Courage, my dear, courage!

*(He leads her off R.)*

*(There is a short pause. The gramophone is heard again, faintly. Then voices are heard, and MOLLY and CONWAY appear up L. MOLLY is wearing a short white evening frock. CONWAY is in evening dress with a dinner-jacket and black tie. He carries a punt-pole.)*

CONWAY. Well, how was that for an ancient mariner? *(Lays down the pole.)*

MOLLY. Splendid! I'm so sorry our voyage is over. Shall we go into the house, or will you stay here and tell me some more?

CONWAY. I don't think I'll go into the house at present. I'm coming to lunch to-morrow, remember, and I never was one to inflict myself on people overmuch. Let's go and sit in this snug hammock chair together. (*He goes R. and sits.* MOLLY follows him, and stands with her hands behind her back.)

MOLLY. I say, Captain Conway?

CONWAY. Well?

MOLLY. Will you write your name in my autograph book?

CONWAY. Rather! Any old time! (*Leaning back luxuriously.*) Oh, this is bliss! Molly, do you know what you are?

MOLLY. No; but I should love to hear! (*She sits down close beside him.*) What am I?

CONWAY. An oasis.

MOLLY (*thoughtfully*). That's something shady, in a desert, isn't it?

CONWAY. Shady is a rather misleading term, Molly, especially when applied to you. The shade you cast is a healing shade, always. You are a human oasis—something very rare, and soothing—

MOLLY (*much flattered*). Oh!

CONWAY. —and refreshing—that a traveller, if he is lucky, may encounter just once or twice in his journey through—the wilderness.

MOLLY. You mean—about your wife? (*He nods.*) Will it hurt you to go on, and tell me the rest?

CONWAY. She left me at last.

MOLLY. Oh! She sounds mean to me.

CONWAY. We mustn't be too hard on her.

MOLLY. Is she still alive?

CONWAY. Yes.

MOLLY. I bet she's sorry now.

CONWAY. It's not impossible.

MOLLY. People get wiser as they get older.

CONWAY. How do you know, Molly?

MOLLY. It stands to reason. I'm wiser to-day than I was two years ago, I hope. You wouldn't believe the silly things I used to do and think. I thought the Derby was run at Derby—instead of at Ascot! I expect she's sorry all right. Is she all alone, do you know?

CONWAY. She has the children.

MOLLY (*pityingly*). Oh! So you lost your children too? Is she in this country?

CONWAY. Yes.

(MOLLY slips down on a cushion on the grass, with her arms round her knees, gazing intently before her, evidently overtaken by some

*new thought. CONWAY looks about him cautiously. Evidently he is meditating some definite step. Suddenly they address one another simultaneously.)*

CONWAY } together. { Molly!  
MOLLY } Captain Conway!

MOLLY. I beg your pardon! Go on.

CONWAY. No, you go on. My remarks will keep. Apparently yours won't. What is the big thought?

MOLLY. I was thinking that I would like better than anything else in this world to find out where your wife is, and get to know her really well; then, when I'd found out if she was truly sorry—and I am certain she is—I would tell her where to find you. That's what I should like to do.

CONWAY (*smiling*). You aren't at all impulsive, are you?

MOLLY. You're laughing at me! (*Stands up.*)

CONWAY. On the contrary!

MOLLY. I know I'm impulsive. It amuses Joan and Denny fearfully. I get it from my father. Mother's often told me that he used to do impulsive things. He'd suddenly give some one all the money he had in his pocket, and things like that—just because he felt sorry for them.

CONWAY. Oh, she told you that, did she?

MOLLY. Yes. But of course I don't need to tell you these things. I forgot—you knew him; I envy you for that. (*She kneels on the cushion.*)

CONWAY. Why?

MOLLY. Because I never saw him; and he never saw me. I was born after he died.

CONWAY (*slowly*). I see. I must say the revelation of your existence rather took me by surprise this afternoon. I hadn't bargained for you, Molly.

MOLLY. Bargained for me?

CONWAY. Yes. I thought I knew everything about Denis Cradock, and all the time I never knew he had three children.

MOLLY (*enviously*). Still, you knew him!

CONWAY. None better!

MOLLY. Were you brother-officers?

CONWAY. Yes.

MOLLY. Were you on the "Helianthus" when she went down?

CONWAY. Yes.

MOLLY. Did you see the way he died?

CONWAY. No. (*Pause.*) I was on another part of the ship.

MOLLY. Of course! You'd be looking after your men.

CONWAY. Yes—naturally.

MOLLY. You know how he died, I suppose?

CONWAY. I never heard the full story.

MOLLY. Mother told it to me as soon as I was big enough to

understand ; and I've heard it from her so often since that I almost feel now as if I'd been there and seen everything.

CONWAY (*startled*). Your mother ?

MOLLY. Yes.

CONWAY. Tell me the story, Molly.

MOLLY. I have got it so deeply by heart that I shall have to tell it to you in Mother's own words.

CONWAY. Go on.

MOLLY (*rising on her knees, and folding her hands*). After the big ship went down, while the boats were tossing about on the waves, crowded with people, they tried to pass some of the women and children from one terribly overcrowded boat to another which had more room in it. There was a little girl in the crowded boat—the littlest of all the ship's company. She was separated from her mother, so they tried to pass her over into the boat where her mother was. They'd almost done it when a great wave surged up between the two boats and drove them apart.

CONWAY. And the child ?

MOLLY. She dropped between the boats and went under—out of sight. Directly after that the boats swung together again. But just before they touched, a man dived after her, into the gap between.

CONWAY. And he saved her ?

MOLLY. Yes. Next time the boats swung apart there he was with the little girl in his arms ! He held her up, and they lifted her on board and gave her to her mother. But just as they were reaching out hands to help him, he slipped down under the boat, out of sight ; and when the boat was moved over, he was gone ! They didn't see him again.

CONWAY. Who was he ?

MOLLY (*rapturously*). He was my father ! (*She sinks down again, and there is a pause.*)

(CONWAY is staring at her transfixed.)

(*Presently MOLLY continues.*) They thought afterwards that he must have struck his head against something as he dived—a piece of driftwood, or the side of the boat. They could see his face was bleeding. All he had strength for was to hold up the little girl for a moment. He could save her—but not himself ! Now you know why I envy you !

(*There is another pause. Distant music again. CONWAY rises, and goes and looks out over the river. He speaks over his shoulder.*)

CONWAY. And you had this story from your mother ?

MOLLY. Yes.

CONWAY. Has she told it to you often ?

MOLLY. Over and over again. We were brought up on it. Joan and Denny call it "The Legend." It never varies. Mother says



it is printed on her heart. I don't believe she could alter it if she would.

CONWAY (*unsteadily*). It must be a very precious memory for you all.

MOLLY. It's the most precious thing we have. Denny and Joan don't glory in it openly, like me; but then they aren't impulsive or romantic. I know they feel just as I do, though.

CONWAY (*half to himself*). It must be rather splendid to have children who remember you as that sort of man.

MOLLY. It's splendid for them to have had such a father. (*Rises.*) I'll tell mother I've told you the story. I know she won't mind your knowing. Perhaps you would like to hear it from her yourself? Ask her, to-morrow.

CONWAY (*after a slight pause*). I am not quite sure if I shall see her to-morrow.

MOLLY. Oh! Why?

CONWAY. I may have to go away. I have had some news.

MOLLY. Not bad news, I hope?

CONWAY. No—not bad news. Only sudden. I think I will say good-night now, Molly.

MOLLY (*producing her autograph book from her sash*). Sign this first, will you?

CONWAY. Certainly.

MOLLY. There's some light under that lantern.

(*He takes the book L., and signs it under one of the lanterns.*)

MOLLY. Oh, you're writing it on Lord Roberts' page!

CONWAY. I'm sorry.

MOLLY. Never mind! He was a friend of yours.

CONWAY (*surprised*). Lord Roberts?

MOLLY. No—my father. I always pretend that his name is written on that page too. That's all.

CONWAY. I understand.

MOLLY. Will you be away from here long?

CONWAY. I don't know. I am not sure. I may have to go abroad again. There, Molly! (*He hands her the book.*) I've only put my initials, D. C. I don't think I have the right to put more—on that page.

MOLLY. Thank you so much. We shall miss you most awfully.

CONWAY. Will you?

MOLLY. Yes—all of us.

CONWAY. And I shall miss you. You, Molly, more than any of them.

MOLLY (*with entire sincerity*). Don't! I am not worth it. I am an awful little idiot, really. I am impulsive, and sentimental, and an ancestor-worshipper—

CONWAY. Go on being impulsive! Go on with your ancestor-worship! For all you know, you may be doing some poor old

ancestor a lot of good, keeping him on a pedestal—even though he may not be entitled to it.

MOLLY (*giving her hand*). All right, I will! Good night.

CONWAY (*taking her hand*). Molly, I have a daughter just about your age. Will you give me a kiss for her?

MOLLY. Of course I will—if you don't mind my telling mother. She told me I could do anything of that kind I liked, so long as I told her directly afterwards.

CONWAY. I accept your terms. Tell your mother. I don't think she will be angry. (*He kisses MOLLY, then suddenly hugs her.*) Good night!

MOLLY. Good night! (*She runs off, up the steps.*)

(CONWAY watches her for a moment: then goes R., and resumes his gaze out over the river. MILDRED enters R. He turns and sees her.)

CONWAY. Hallo, Mildred!

MILDRED. What have you been saying to her? What have you been telling her?

CONWAY. Very little. She has told me a good deal, though. I gave her a message for you. I expect she will deliver it when you see her. I must go now.

MILDRED. Denis! (*Cross C., and turns.*)

CONWAY (*pausing*). Well?

MILDRED. What story have you been telling to that defenceless child?

CONWAY. Mildred, Molly may be a child, but she is not defenceless. She wears the most effective armour in the world.

MILDRED. I don't understand.

CONWAY. You will, presently. Good night!

MILDRED. Good night!

CONWAY (*pausing, R.*). Milly, may I say something to you?

MILDRED. What?

CONWAY. Only this. If I had a hat on, I would take it off to you. Good night.

MILDRED. Good night!

(*For a few moments they stand motionless, gazing at one another as if already conscious that this is their last meeting in life. Then*

CONWAY goes off R. MILDRED, after a moment's hesitation, goes slowly L. and calls softly.)

Molly! Molly!

MOLLY (*voice*). Coming, Mother. (*She runs down the steps.*) I was wondering where you were.

MILDRED. What did you and Captain Conway find to talk about, dear?

MOLLY. Oh, quite a lot of things. He's had an awfully interest-

ing life, but rather a sad one, I'm afraid. (*Coming to c.*) By the way, he gave me a message for you.

MILDRED. What is it, dear?

MOLLY. He's very sorry, but he can't come to lunch to-morrow. He has to go to London.

MILDRED (*startled*). For long?

MOLLY. I think so. He said he might have to go abroad.

MILDRED. Alone?

MOLLY. I suppose so. He's had some news. Not bad news. I asked him that particularly.

MILDRED. Not bad news—just sudden?

MOLLY. That's exactly what he said. (*They begin to walk R. arm in arm.*) Mother, I told him "The Legend."

MILDRED. What did he say when you had told him, dear?

MOLLY. He said nothing for a while. Then he said he thought it must be rather a splendid thing for a man to be remembered in that way by his children. I said it was a splendid thing for us to have such a man to remember. Then he found it was time for him to go, and he said good night. Shall we try and find the others in the Enclosure? (*Cross R.*)

MILDRED (*looking up the river*). The fireworks are all over. The people must be on their way home. Hark!

MOLLY. What is it? I can't hear anything. (*Touching her.*) Mother, you've gone all cold. What's the matter?

MILDRED. It's nothing, dear. I thought I heard shouting. I expect it's only the crowd of punts and boats breaking up.

MOLLY (*going L.*). Come along and see what it is. (*Stopping short for a moment.*) I say, Mother!

MILDRED. Yes, dear?

MOLLY. I kissed him when I said good night just now. I told him first about telling you, and he said he didn't think you would be angry. Are you?

MILDRED. No, dear, I am not angry.

MOLLY. He has a daughter my age. Did you know?

MILDRED. Yes, dear—I knew.

(*They go out R.*)

(*Presently DENIS and PHYLLIS appear L. PHYLLIS is as demure as ever. DENIS is carrying two cushions and a paddle.*)

DENIS. Have you enjoyed yourself—Phyllis?

PHYLLIS. Rather—Denny!

DENIS. I can't tell you what a treat this has been for me. It's seldom one meets a girl in these days who has so much—*er—laissez faire*. Will you—will you shake hands? (*They do so.*) Will you let me teach you to punt to-morrow?

PHYLLIS. Isn't it awfully difficult?

DENIS. Oh, you'll learn all right with plenty of practice. In about a fortnight—or a month, or six weeks.

PHYLLIS. But I can't stay here for ever!

DENIS. Why not? What I mean to say is —

(JOAN'S voice is heard calling agitatedly off R.)

JOAN (*enters R. quickly*). Denny! Denny!

(DENIS is much annoyed.)

DENIS. Oh, Lord! What is it?

JOAN. Oh, there you are. I thought I heard your voice. Thank goodness, it wasn't you.

DENIS. What's the matter, Joan?

JOAN. There's been a most exciting accident. Mother said it was you!

DENIS. What do you mean?

JOAN (*rapidly*). It was when all the boats began to unmoor from the piles. Some people in a punt began to play the fool——

DENIS. In this current? I hope they upset.

JOAN. No, they didn't. But they fouled another punt and pushed it right across the stream, and it got caught on one of the piles. It turned half over, and a child fell out.

PHYLLIS (*giving a little cry*). Oh!

JOAN. Yes, a tiny girl in a white frock. She was carried right down stream, with fifty punts and canoes after her trying to overtake her. It was thrilling!

DENIS. Did they manage to save her?

JOAN. They didn't; but some one else did.

DENIS. Who?

JOAN. It was a man on the towpath, in evening dress. He dived straight after her. He dived just like you do, Denny. We thought it was you—at least Mother did! She called out, "Denis! Denis!",

(MILDRED enters R., followed by MOLLY.)

DENIS (*stopping JOAN and crossing in front of her*). I say, what's the matter? Is it all right, Mother?

MILDRED (*crossing to C. and speaking in a dreamy fashion*). There he was, with the little girl in his arms. He held her up, and they lifted her on board. But just as they were reaching out hands to help him, he slipped down under the boat, out of sight. And when the boat was moved over he was gone! They didn't see him again.

DENIS. Who was he, Mother?

MILDRED. He was—Captain Conway

DENIS. Captain Conway? (*Turns to JOAN, and puts his arm around her.*)



MILDRED (*in the same voice*). They thought he must have struck his head against something when he dived—a piece of driftwood, or the side of the boat. They could see his face was bleeding. All he had strength for was to hold up the little girl for a moment. He could save her, but not himself. (*She sinks down on to a chair, R. of the trellis.*)

DENIS (*very quietly*). I expect they will be able to bring him round—First Aid, and all that. We had better go and get things ready in the house, Joan.

JOAN (*crossing in front of DENIS*). Yes, we'd better. (*Exit into house up the steps.*)

DENIS. You look after Mother, Molly. (*Taking PHYLLIS's arm.*) Come along, Phyllis. (*They both go off up the steps.*)

MOLLY. Will you come into the house too, Mother?

MILDRED. No thank you, dear; not at present. But run and fetch me a wrap.

MOLLY. Yes Mother. (*Exit into house L.*)

(SIR ANTHONY *enters R.*)

MILDRED. They have found him?

SIR ANTHONY. Yes.

MILDRED. Where?

SIR ANTHONY. By the stakes above the weir.

MILDRED. He was dead?

SIR ANTHONY. Yes. They're bringing him here. It is the nearest place.

MILDRED. It is the only place. Uncle Tony, do you know with whom he spent the last hour of his life?

SIR ANTHONY. Molly, wasn't it?

MILDRED. Yes. And it was Molly who found the way out.

SIR ANTHONY. Molly! The littlest of the hostages!

MILDRED. Yes. In all simplicity, in all innocence, she found the way out for us—and for him. When he left her to-night he had accepted her standard—her estimate of himself. He was going away, for good.

SIR ANTHONY (*softly*). The miracle, the miracle! But—how do you know all this?

MILDRED. From what Molly told me. And—from what he said to me himself.

SIR ANTHONY. You saw him?

MILDRED. Yes. Here—just as he was leaving.

SIR ANTHONY. What did he say?

MILDRED. Very little; and what he said was spoken in his old careless, flippant way. But it told me all I needed to know. It repaid me for much. Then we said good night to one another. I shall always be glad we said good night to one another.

SIR ANTHONY (*taking her hand*). You loved him, Mildred?

MILDRED. Always.

SIR ANTHONY. He was a fortunate man at the last. He died just when a man would ask to die—at the biggest moment of his career. He achieved the happy ending.

(MOLLY comes from the house with a wrap, and puts it round her mother's shoulders. MILDRED rises, and gazes out over the river. MOLLY picks up her autograph book from the grass, and goes to SIR ANTHONY. She shows him the initials. He places his arm round her shoulder, and they stand R., watching MILDRED.)

CURTAIN.



WALL PIECE

## SLIDING WINDOWS

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## BACKING



## FURNITURE PLOT FOR ACT I

- |                              |                                |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| A. Dining Table (cleared).   | I. Small Occasional Tables.    |
| B. Small Chairs (4.)         | J. Carpet.                     |
| C. 2 extra Chairs (small).   | K. Sideboard.                  |
| D. 3 Arm-Chairs.             | L. Cabinet or Bureau.          |
| E. Settee (with 2 Cushions). | M. Blue Felt.                  |
| F. Small Table.              | N. Old Gold Felt.              |
| G. Small Table.              | O. Bank of Flowers (as Act I). |
| H. 4 Rugs.                   | Curtains as Act I.             |

Hand Properties required on Property Plot of Act I.

## PROPERTY PLOT FOR ACT I

*Carpet square down in ACTS I and II.*

*Prompt Side.*

Hearthrug in front of fireplace.

*On Mantelpiece.*

- 1 Cromwellian Clock.
- 2 Vases with Roses in same.
- 1 Ash Tray.

- 1 Match Stand, filled with Matches.
- 3 Photo Frames, with photos of Denny, Joan, and Sir Anthony.

Settee. 2 cushions on same.

1 Occasional Table at head of settee. ON IT ARE—

- 4 Newspapers: Mail.
- Mirror.
- Telegraph.
- Times.

- Cigarettes in Metal Cigarette Box.
- Match Stand with Matches.
- 1 Ash Tray.

6 ft. Sideboard (P.S. Up stage). ON IT ARE—

- 1 Sideboard Cloth.
- 1 Port Decanter with Port.
- 1 Sherry Decanter with Sherry.

- 2 Sherry Glasses.
- 2 Tumblers.
- Syphon of Soda.

*Flower bank and flowers for fireplace.*

Cabinet or Writing Bureau. ON IT ARE—

- 1 Vase with roses.

Arm-chair down L. corner with cushion in it.

1 Occasional Table up at back P.S. ON IT ARE—

- 1 Vase filled with Sweet Peas.

1 Rug in front of French Windows (Centre).

1 Occasional Table up at back. ON IT ARE—

- 1 Vase filled with Sweet Peas.

1 Rug in front of staircase.

1 Rug in front of dining-room entrance R.

Gate Leg Table set for breakfast (down R.C.).

ON IT ARE—

- 2 Butler's trays with 2 table-cloths over them.

- 6 large Knives.

- 1 Fruit Stand with artificial fruit and real apples and bananas.

- 6 small Knives.

- 1 Cup and Saucer (end of table down stage has been used, tea in cup).

- 6 large Forks.

- 6 small Plates.

- Bread Plate and Knife.

- 1 Toast Rack with Toast.

- Salt Cellar.

- Butter Dish with Butter.

- 1 large Plate end of table down stage has been used.

- 1 Butter Knife.

- 6 Serviettes.

- 1 Teaspoon for used cup (as above)

Dinner Waggon (down right-hand corner). ON IT ARE—

- |                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 2 Tray Cloths.                    | Silver Teapot with Tea.                     |
| 4 small Wooden Bowls and Spoons.  | Milk Jug with Milk.                         |
| in it.                            | Sugar Basin with Sugar (lump).              |
| 1 large Wooden Bowl with porridge | 1 Silver Entrée Dish and Cover with Bananas |
| 1 large Wooden Spoon.             | as Sausages.                                |
| 5 Breakfast Cups and Saucers.     | 1 large Spoon.                              |
| 5 Teaspoons.                      |   |

Chairs for breakfast table set as follows—

- |   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Arm-chair at head of table.             | 1 small Chair up stage O.P. |
| Small Chair at end of table down stage. | 1 Arm-chair down stage O.P. |
| 2 small Chairs side by side R.C.        |                             |

HAND PROPERTIES. (*Table off stage R. for same.*)

*For Simmons.*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1 Round Salver. ON IT—   |  |
| 6 brown-paper Parcels, various sizes, for Denny Cradock, also Letters for him. | 1 Tobacco Jar.   |
| 2 Letters for Mildred Cradock.   | Gold Horseshoe Tie Pin in case, wrapped in tissue paper. (Her first entrance with tray.) |
| 2 Letters for Sir Anthony Fenwick (I.O.H.M.S.).                                |  |

Second entrance with tray. ON IT—

*Simmons.* 1 round Salver with Decanter of Whisky and Tumbler.

*For Harold.*

- |                         |                     |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 Leather Thermos Case. | 2 Luncheon Baskets. |
| 2 Punt Cushions.        |                     |

*For Molly Cradock.*

- |   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| 1 Leather Music Case.                       | 1 Fountain Pen. |
| 1 Autograph Book with blotting paper in it. |                 |

*For Mrs. Cradock.*

- 1 Envelope containing cheque.

*For Sir Anthony Fenwick.*

- 1 Envelope containing cheque.

*For Denny Cradock.*

- 1 Dummy 10s. Note.

*For Joan Cradock.*

- 1 Vanity Bag, containing powder, puff and small mirror.

*For Miss Meakin.*

- |                  |                        |
|------------------|------------------------|
| 1 Walking Stick, | 1 pair of Eye Glasses. |
| 1 Book,          |                        |







## ACT II.

*Furniture the same as ACT I, except the following:*

Dining-table cleared and moved up stage as shown in Scene Plot. ON IT ARE—

4 £5 Notes and several loose Cheques. 1 Note Book.

Several loose sheets of Paper. 1 Ash Tray.

1 large Blotting Pad.

(*Dinner wagon struck.*) Occasional Table in place of same. ON IT ARE—

1 Tobacco Jar as used in Act I.

Occasional Table at head of Settee. ON IT ARE—

1 Newspaper. Match Stand.

Cigarettes in Metal Cigarette

Box (as ACT I).

2 Small Chairs *extra required.*

Setting as shown in Scene Plot.

*Off stage R. Hand properties.*

*Miss Meakin.*

Walking Stick.

Fountain Pen.

*Dale Conway.*

1 Fountain Pen.

1 Cheque Book.

*Harold Bagby.*

Loose Cheque.

Fountain Pen.

*Denny Cradock.*

Large Calabash Pipe and Tobacco.

*Sir Thomas Mobberly.*

Several loose sheets of paper.

The diagram is a hand-drawn sketch of a landscape. At the top, the text 'RIVER LANDSCAPE' is written. Below it, a horizontal line represents a 'RIVER'. A 'LOW HEDGE' is indicated by a series of 'X' marks. To the left of the hedge, an arrow points left towards 'TO ENCLOSURE'. To the right of the hedge, an arrow points right towards 'TO LANDING STAGE'. Below the hedge, a 'TRELLIS FENCE' is shown as a rectangular area with a cross-hatch pattern. To the right of the fence, a series of circles represents 'CHINESE LANTERNS'. Further right, two 'BEEHIVE CHAIR' icons are shown. Below the chairs, a 'DOUBLE HAMMOCK-CHAIR' is depicted as a rectangular shape. To the right of the hammock, another 'BEEHIVE CHAIR' is shown. At the far right, a 'WING BORDER' is indicated by a series of vertical lines. The entire diagram is enclosed in a simple rectangular frame.

## LOW HEDGE

[illegible]

← TO ENCLOSURE

TO LANDING STAGE →

TRELLIS  
FENCE

BEEHIVE  
CHAIR

CHAIR

CHINESE LANTERNS

WING BORDER

## WING BORDER

STEPS DOWN FROM HOUSE

WING BORDER

### ACT III.

GRAMOPHONE.

CANOE PADDLE for Denis.

PUNT POLE for Conway.

CUSHIONS in plenty.

AUTOGRAPH BOOK for Molly.

FOUNTAIN PEN for Molly.

CUSHIONS and PADDLE for Denis.

WRAP for Molly.

13  
5  
3  
27

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---

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*Continued from second page of cover.*

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